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July

1927

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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by Richard Wilmer Rowan

"The Empty Sleeve"
by Everett Shinn

"The Master of Swords"
by Beryl Symonds

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MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

All of them great stories and all of them in the August number of

At Your Newsdealer's MYSTERY MAGAZINE *Price 25c*

ROBERT SIMPSON, EDITOR

Volume XI Number 4

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN ..... FRED. T. EVERETT
AROUND THE CORNER ..... THE EDITOR 386
THE MASTER OF SWORDS ..... BERYL SYMONDS 387
Complete Novelette
THE BREAK ..... J. AINSWORTH MORGAN 400
A Short Story
FROM THIS WE ROSE ..... ROBERT W. SNEDDON 410
A Short Story
THE EMPTY SLEEVE ..... EVERETT SHINN 417
Complete Novelette
NOTHING EVER HAPPENS TO ANGEL ..... EVADNE PRICE 434
No. 5—The Ace of Clews
SCARLET SNOW ..... MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON 443
A Short Story
THE WEB AND THE NET ..... RICHARD WILMER ROWAN 454
A Two-Part Story—Part I
SHANGHAI DEVILTRY ..... ALEXANDER WILLIAMS 478
A Short Story
FOR THE FUN OF IT ..... MAX EGLOFF 485
A Short Story
THE CARTERVILLE APPARITION ..... REGINALD SWEETLAND 498
A Short Story
UP THERE ..... CHARLES ARNISON 506
A Short Story

MISCELLANEOUS

WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER? 416
STATE FUNERAL FOR A BIRD 484

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Around the Corner

THIS July number of Mystery Magazine is one of which we feel justifiably proud. The contents comprise ten complete stories and the first installment of a two-part serial. The character of the stories typifies every mood, and none of them can be accused of being a blue-print repetition of any other story in the magazine. Each story has its own individuality and its own strictly personal kind of wallop; and even if the climax in the majority of cases is of the dramatic order, we cannot see that this constitutes any cause for complaint.

No foreword accompanies any of these stories. They come to you more or less unheralded and unsung, to be accepted or rejected on their face value. We bought them and we print them because we believe they are in every sense of the word *good stories well told.*

What do you think?

THE EDITOR.

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of MYSTERY MAGAZINE, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1927—State of Massachusetts, County of Suffolk, ss.—Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Chester H. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Assistant to the President of the PRISCILLA COMPANY, publishers of MYSTERY MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher—The Priscilla Company, 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass. Editor—Robert Simpson, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York City. Managing Editor—None. Business Manager—Henry W. Newhall, President, 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass.

2. That the owner is (If the publication is owned by an individual his name and address, or if owned by more than one individual the name and address of each, should be given below; if the publication is owned by a corporation the name of the corporation and the names and addresses of the stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of the total amount of stock should be given): The Priscilla Company, Est. W. N. Hartshorn, Arthur J. Crockett, Henry W. Newhall, Lida P. Newhall, Alice C. Crockett, Charles B. Marble, Earle R. Macausland, Fred. J. McLaughlin, Chester H. Smith, Oakley R. Jones, Myron C. Gates, George H. Hands—all of 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, Mass.

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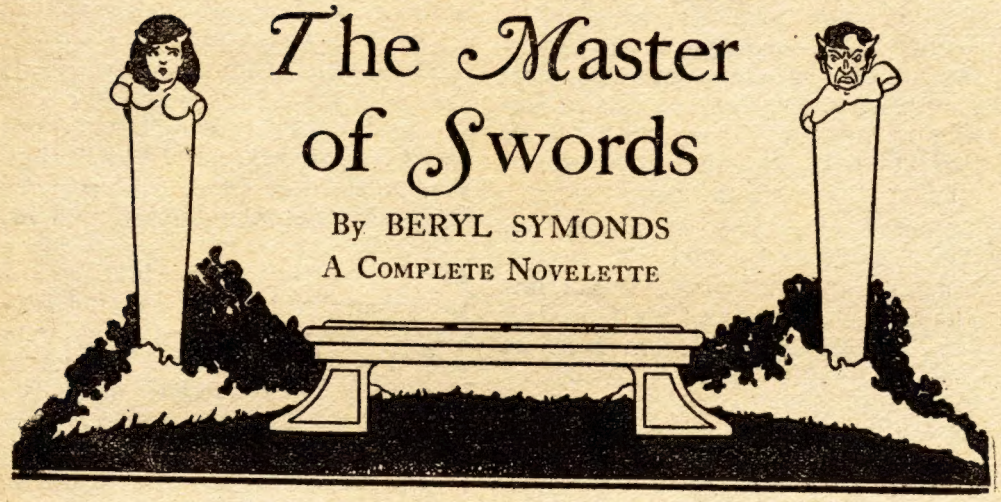
C. H. SMITH.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 23rd day of March, 1927. Myron C. Gates. (My commission expires Sept. 24, 1928.)



The Master of Swords

By BERYL SYMONDS

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

I

LET me write quickly while the facts are still clear cut in memory. No time for reflection. I must be quick.

I have stood on the threshold between life and death, seeing both worlds, and I bear witness that the prayer of the living was answered by the help of the dead. I bear witness that there is no death.

True it is that my pulse beats more quickly than usual, but my brain is clear and my blood cool. This writing shall testify to the steadiness of my hand. No fevered imaginations grasp me.

The first part of the story can wait. It is the end that must be written now while my eyes still see the duel between Antonio Revello and Gian di Morona.

It is done. All is safely recorded. I have read that which I have written, and I will swear before any priest of the Almighty God that what is written did in verity pass before my eyes.

And this is the loyal word of John Henry Bardown, of Bardown parish, in the county of Sussex, England.

With the record safely written, I may leave it and begin the story of which it is the strange and sacred culmination.

I AM forty years old. I have met many and varied types of men and women and amongst them I have trained myself to observation of life, and to deduction of life's lessons therefrom.

Ten years ago I married my dear wife, and her poised belief in God and the beauty of her soul have played their share in my study of human nature.

I do not say that I share her faith completely. There is always a pull of caution in my blood. No quick judgments, a restraint in enthusiasm; a firm hand in imagination, a deliberate cultivation of calm reason.

If I have written so much of myself, it is to show that men may not lightly put me down as the victim

of a mind swayed by imagination, or as a highly strung nervous person, or as one drawn suddenly into a new environment.

I am John Bardown, an English country gentleman, yet a cosmopolitan in my close acquaintance with European cities. At one time a soldier of fortune, always an actor in life, but with the mind of a trained student to control my activities.

And dueling was no novelty to me. I smile as I write.

John Bardown's name is not unknown in England and his fame has been no faint torch even here in Italy amongst the demi-gods of sword and rapier craft. But when I have killed, it has been to defend the weak, punish the bully, and preserve my honor. No greed has ever brought my blade from its sheath, no innocent blood has ever soiled its whiteness.

Many years ago I made the acquaintance of the greatest swordsman and the greatest gentleman in all Northern Italy, il Conti Sordello di Morona.

The acquaintance developed into a friendship that deepened with the passing of the years.

Every two years, my wife and I visited him and the Contessa Lucia in their palace in Turin, and accompanied them in the spring to their beautiful estate of Santa Lurina, which is set like a jewel in the mountains looking down upon the city.

We four were an harmonious quartette. Janet and I are childless, and perhaps for that reason took an even greater and more affectionate interest in Gian, only child of my friends, and in his cousin Maddalena di Forsiri, the orphaned girl whom Sordello and his wife were bringing up in their household.

For ten years we continued these visits. The Count and Countess could never be persuaded to come to England.

Foreigners do not travel so easily from home as we English do, but nothing could exceed their hospitality in their own country.

Then, when Gian was twenty, the Countess died. What she left alive in her husband's heart became centered in their son, and I like to think that he set even greater store by the friendship between himself and me.

IT IS now May, in the loveliness of these lakes and mountains and trees and flowers of Northern Italy. Janet and I came to Santa Lurina in March, our first visit since the death of the Countess Lucia.

Gian is twenty-two, a charming youth, handsome and brave, but he will never equal his father in strength of character and poise of intellect.

Still, he is the most pleasing young man I know, and he and his cousin Maddalena will make a gracious pair and reign worthily over the vast estates.

Their marriage was Sordello's ardent desire and the young couple asked nothing better themselves.

Maddalena is beautiful, with her heavy black hair as lustrous as satin, her small delicate features, velvety eyes and crimson mouth breaking like a flower against the creamy cameo of her face.

She makes a great contrast to my English wife, who, at thirty, looks scarcely a day more than twenty-five.

Gold hair, blue eyes, English purity of skin, and the perfect grace of a well-bred English lady, distinguish Janet Bardown. She has no peer in the whole creation of womanhood.

On a warm April evening my friend, Count Sordello, and I sat upon the terrace of the garden,

which overhangs the mountain road winding toward the city.

He was silent, no unusual thing since the death of the gracious countess, his wife, but today I fancied a heavier weight than usual clouded his brow.

He was a handsome man, and a great nobleman because he was a great gentleman.

His friends honored him, his family and his dependents loved him. His enemies hated and feared him. And he was the greatest swordsman in Italy.

From where we sat, we looked down upon the road beneath the castle wall and saw a horseman ascending to the gates. The frown on Sordello's face deepened.

"Yonder rides my trouble," he said. "It is my kinsman, Pietro di Laga. What evil brings him to Santa Lurina?"

I knew something of this Pietro, il conti di Laga, and did not like what I knew. He had squandered the greater part of his large estate and was living on his wits. Some said by brigandage.

It was common knowledge that the end of the rope was slipping through his fingers and utter ruin confronted him unless his cousin, the Count of Morona, and Gian, the only son, died without leaving heirs to their great wealth.

Sordello turned to me.

"*Amico mio,* this is a very evil man, so evil and shameless that I have at length refused to help him again. Yet he has the audacity to present himself at Santa Lurina today."

"Refuse admittance," I suggested.

"No. I prefer to know what lies in wait. Already I hear voices. I think Gian and Maddalena come with him."

Three figures appeared on the stone-flagged path which runs from the upper terrace between ilex trees to the rose-grown terrace where we sat—Maddalena and Gian and Pietro di Laga.

Pietro bowed easily to his cousin, the Count Sordello, who had risen, and politely to myself.

He was a man of thirty-five, handsome after the fashion of Northern Italy, black hair, smooth pale skin and soft brown eyes, whose smile hid a soul as false as hell.

Count Sordello, in his height and his strength and the nobility and power of his bearing, forced the other man into a contrast that actually seemed to make him shrivel.

Yet he showed no sign of abasement. Rather was his manner overassured. He looked again at me.

"*Buon giorno,* cousin. May I speak to you on a family matter of some importance?"

I noticed that Maddalena had drawn closer to Gian and was eyeing Pietro with open hostility. Her dark beauty was wonderful against the yellow satin dress she wore.

Gian held his slim figure erect, and I saw his nostrils twitch. No love lay between these cousins.

"There can be no matter of family between us," said Count Sordello. "You have forfeited any such claim. I have told you that neither here nor in Turin can you be received. I hoped you would spare me the distasteful necessity of forbidding my servants to admit you."

Pietro could not keep the flash from his eyes, but his voice remained smoothly insolent.

"That would be the last humiliation I should accept at your hands, my cousin. Will you really not hear what I have ridden at great length to say to you? A hot ride, too, and a thirsty one, *per baccho!* Is there no longer hospitality in Santa Lurina?"

His colossal impertinence angered

even my English calm. I looked to see how Sordello took it and saw his face very pale and very deadly, but quiet enough.

Gian, on the contrary, had made a step forward and his eyes were snapping.

"My father, you will not suffer this insolence," he said.

At that Pietro turned on him with joy, like a man who has gained his desire.

"Will you forbid me?" he cried, and his hand was on his sword-hilt. Then the Count Sordello di Morona said quietly:

"This is not your affair, my son.

"Pietro di Laga, since you have intruded upon us here, I will listen to what you have to say.

"But remember that it is for the last time. If ever you dare to set foot in the grounds of Santa Lurina again, my guards shall beat you from them."

I turned to withdraw. Maddalena would have led Gian away, but, with a gesture, Pietro checked her. Of me, he took no further notice at all, and as I paused uncertain, Sordello motioned me to stay.

Pietro di Laga looked from one to the other of us with a mocking smile on his thin lips and a devil in each eye.

Then he moved close to Maddalena and took her hand and raised it to his lips.

She uttered a cry and tried to free it, but he held it firmly and as Gian sprang forward, whipped out his sword and presented it at the boy's breast. And over the naked blade he called to the Count Sordello:

"I have the honor to ask the hand of the Signorina Maddalena di Forsiri in marriage."

Then he released her and she stood with panting breast and flaming eyes, rubbing her handkerchief over the place his lips had profaned.

"Coward!" she cried. "Infamous and insulting! With all the world, you know I am betrothed to Gian. Yet if it were not so, I would die sooner than wed with so debased a cavalier as you have shown yourself this day."

Gian carried no sword that morning, neither did his father, and as the boy's hand shot out to strike the blackguard, Sordello caught him back.

"Steady, *figlio mio*," he said in an authoritative voice. "We cannot cross swords with dirt."

"The affront was meditated," stormed Gian, while Maddalena still flamed.

But Pietro di Laga remained unmoved by her scorn or by the black shame put upon him by Sordello.

"The bambino has intelligence," he sneered, and returned his sword to its sheath. "You did well to stop the blow, Cousin Sordello. Antonio Revello is in Turin again."

The color died slowly from Maddalena's cheeks. I saw Gian flinch before he threw up his head proudly, and I saw the impossible happen, when fear passed across the face of the Count Sordello di Morona.

Pietro saw it, too, and laughed.

"In the matter of that loan, cousin!"

"No," said Sordello scornfully. "You murderer, who employ another man to do your killing!"

A spasm of blinding rage distorted Pietro's handsome, evil face, but even then the devil had himself well in hand.

He laughed and looked about him, at the noble gardens, the great castle towers rising above the trees, at the rich domain of vine and corn and olive, spreading over the countryside, rolling even as far as Turin itself.

"Hard words will fall lightly upon

the owner of these great possessions, cousin."

It was an open menace, and he followed it with worse.

"And lightly upon a loving husband, adorable Maddalena. Remember such a husband awaits you when Gian is no longer here."

He looked from one to the other of us with his impudent smile.

That great gentleman, my friend, the Count Sordello, made no sign.

Gian, his son, stood upright beside his father, the same mantle of dignity covering both.

Maddalena's small lovely head was crested proudly upon the white column of her throat.

So these three stood and with quiet eyes returned his stare. And at last his own eyes dropped, and he squirmed a little like a snake.

I would gladly have struck him then, and fought him afterward, but such assumption of their quarrel, even in friendship's name, would have fitted ill with Morona pride and dignity.

Therefore I stood aside, barely containing myself, and he slid away, a vicious serpent, like the devil of old crawling out of the Eden he had ruined.

Yet before he had gone ten paces he stopped again.

Janet was coming down the path between the dark green of the ilex trees.

In her white dress, with her pale, calm, exquisite face beneath the coronet of her golden hair, she came like one of the seraphim which guard the gates of Paradise.

I saw her look at Pietro in passing, and I saw him flinch and draw aside, and when she had passed him, he looked after her with an angry, perplexed frown before he finally went his way.

II

LATER in the day Count Sordello took Gian into the salle d'armes of the castle and for an hour the two fenced, with myself as spectator. The faces of both were very serious.

This was no pastime, but a lesson of deadly import from the great swordsman to the younger man who could never hope to equal him.

With all his efforts, Sordello had never succeeded in making Gian anything better than a second-rate swordsman. Nothing of his own marvelous genius could he transmit to his son.

Gian always fenced mechanically, like one putting into practice what he has learned by an effort of memory.

It always seemed to me that Sordello's soul played along the fiery whip and thrust of his blade, while in Gian's hands a sword remained no more than an uninspired length of steel.

To my knowledge he had never fought any duel save those common to college students, where all are fairly equal in skill.

At last Sordello drew back and signified the lesson to be ended.

Gian's face was pale, but he smiled at me as he went, leaving me with his father.

Sordello sank upon a seat, just as he was, in the black silk fencing breeches and white shirt, and bent the supple blade of his rapier across his knees.

"He will be killed," he said. "Antonio Revello will kill him." And then he told me of this Revello whose name and fame were becoming infamous throughout all Northern Italy.

He was, it appeared, with the exception of Sordello di Morona himself, the most famous swordsman in all Italy, of the same age as myself

and as slim and as quick as whipcord.

No laggard in his cups, but no drunkard. The man had too lofty a pride in his craft to imperil it by over-indulgence.

He was a great master of his weapon because he consecrated himself to it and sacrificed his human desires on the altar of its perfection.

It is also the disgraceful truth that he sold his sword to the highest bidder, without the least scruple or the least interest in the justice of the cause he served.

There were men, yes, and women, too, who hired Antonio Revello to maim or to kill in open fight, when they dared not murder by stealth.

Revello was a past master in the art of studied affront, which left his victim no choice between fighting and dishonor. Although men were certain by intuition of his venality, no one had sufficient proof to bring a definite accusation.

To outward appearance he was a gentleman of leisure, living very quietly, never entering into any tavern brawl, and in no sense what is termed a bravo and a *braggadocio.*

Moreover, he always fought fairly. Perhaps because he, too, had his sense of honor, perhaps because he would not use means which would have cast a slur upon his skill and an insult upon the infallibility of his weapon. A silent, avaricious man, and a deadly swordsman.

He was less a personality than an instrument placed at the disposal of whosoever would pay his price, and so sinister was his work and so deadly and so cold and inhuman his callousness to the victims of his skill, that people feared him as they feared the devil himself.

As is usual in such cases, the ignorant and the superstitious built round him a fabric of supernatural terror.

Even the educated held that man doomed who must cross swords with him, and the most hardened found it difficult to think unmoved upon the long list of his prey—dead or maimed.

Therefore, the man who fought him was trebly handicaped by Antonio's marvelous skill, by his deadly reputation and by the atmosphere of horror with which the first two clothed him as with a visible shield.

"And for myself, I would always put the last first," said the Count. "In nine cases out of ten it breaks the morale of his opponents before ever their blades have clashed."

He fell silent again for a moment, then continued:

"Three times have I met him and worsted him in trials of skill, but when at last his reputation became so black, I told him that if ever I were driven to the dishonor of crossing swords with him in earnest, I would kill him and rid the world of a debased scoundrel.

"And he has swallowed the affront and avoided all risk of meeting the only man he fears on earth, because he has no wish to die before he has amassed yet more gold.

"This is the man who will challenge Gian to the duel, and who will kill him."

He spoke in tones of such bitter despair, so calmly, so certainly, that they were more terrible than any violent declaration.

"He will not dare," I said. "This scoundrel knows he will have you to reckon with."

"*Amico* John, *gentilhomo inglesi,* I shall be dead."

A smile flickered in his eyes. "Do not be so astounded. Here in Italy it is not difficult for men to die. A dark corner, a knife in the back, a hidden poison! *Chi sa!*

"And with me out of the way, who shall save the boy from Revello? Pietro would not use the same method twice."

I was too shaken for clear speech, but I remember blaspheming Pietro di Laga and urging the police and the power of the law to stop his infamy.

Sordello shook his head. "He will strike too soon, and for the present he has only threatened. Also, if I cause his arrest, he will drag our name into the mire.

"I would sooner die; it will not be hard to go to Lucia. It is for Gian I fear, and for Maddalena. And for Santa Lurina, whose people will suffer under the evil of Petro di Laga."

For all his quiet voice, the moisture stood in great drops on his forehead and rolled down his face onto his neck behind the open shirt collar. Suddenly he gripped my hand.

"Will you help the lad when I am gone, John Bardown, my English friend?"

"With all my heart," I answered, but huskily, because I was greatly troubled in spirit.

That same night I told the story to Janet. She has her own way of receiving news which disturbs other people.

"We all go at our appointed time, and God rules the universe," she said calmly.

I must pause a while. The mystery and the awe sweep over me again. Once again I see the duel, the two principal figures, the seconds, the trees, the grass, the sky. And then—I must close my eyes and rest a little. It is only now I perceive how deeply my very soul is shaken.

NOW I will take up my story again and with it comes the resurgence of grief for my loss of a month ago, when Count Sordello di Morona died, even as he foretold, by the hand of that black lackey, Pietro di Laga.

It was so cruelly simple. We had passed a happy day, riding over the mountain roads, lingering in the forests, feasting upon the river's bank.

Sordello and Gian had taken Janet and me upon a tour of inspection to outlying farms. Maddalena also accompanied us.

Three weeks had passed since Pietro's visit without bringing any further sign of him. The daily fencing lessons continued, but young hearts cannot remain over-long oppressed.

Gian and Maddalena were like merry children that morning.

Janet was a serene, beatific goddess. Sordello commented upon her peace.

"Perhaps she is right. *Il buon Dio* still reigns. Let us honor Him with cheerful faces."

So for this one day at least the shadow hanging over Santa Lurina was first ignored and then forgotten.

Sordello, it is true, referred to it once in again speaking of my wife.

She was riding on Gian's left, and the boy was talking and laughing with her while Maddalena joined in also. Both adored her in their impulsive, ardent Italian fashion.

"It is strange," said Sordello to me, "but the conviction dawns upon me that the signora will help to save Gian."

That was the only token he gave, during that happy day, of remembering the hovering cloud.

When the sweet, spring evening came, we rode, as cheerfully as we had set forth, back to the castle, passed over the drawbridge into the vast courtyard, and drew rein at the

great doors where servants came running to receive our horses.

Sordello paused to give an order concerning the animals, and Maddalena went first into the lofty hall.

A solid silver table, six feet by three, stood in a window bay. It was the most valuable piece among the castle's treasures, and now on it lay a small gilt casket.

The girl hurried to the table and examined the casket.

"A present from the Town, my guardian," she called gaily. "See, the Marchesa Pesanti sends you *comfits*, with her compliments," and she made way for Sordello with a laugh.

"The Marchesa is a trifle overgracious. Will you still maintain that she has no designs upon your freedom?"

"Peace, madcap! 'Tis only a compliment from one friend to another."

"From the bella donna to the *galanthdomo*," she dared impishly, and I think we all laughed, knowing of the old Marchesa's shameless pursuit of Sordello.

I suppose we had all been so happy and were still in so gay a mood that we became careless. In that moment, still smiling reproof at the laughing Maddalena, the Count drew the casket toward him, read the accompanying card, and lifted the lid.

It did not yield easily. He put his thumb into the opening as a lever, and held the lid so between thumb and palm, and pressed upward.

There was a grating noise as the feet of the casket slipped upon the polished surface of the silver table, and then, very slowly and gently, without a sound, il Conti Sordello di Morona sank to the floor. His hand dragged the casket over the table with him.

And now there are four deep grooves made by the feet of the casket in the surface of the silver table, where they will stay forever to mark how the great nobleman and gentleman was slain by the vicious coward and ruffian, il Conti Pietro di Lega.

III

COUNT SORDELLO was buried with the pomp and pageantry befitting his great estate, and Gian reigned in his stead.

At his urgent request, Janet and I stayed on. Maddalena must have a duenna and who so desirable as Janet?

It was agreed that we should remain until the period of mourning was ended and the marriage could take place.

I will pass swiftly over the grief which first prostrated Gian and Maddalena, over my own sorrow and my beloved wife's gentle ministrations.

I will not linger over the time of mourning decreed by Italian etiquette and the Roman Church, but pass to the closing days of the month when Sordello had been three weeks in the family vault of the Moroni.

He had been poisoned when his thumb, pressing upon the box, released the sharp steel point charged with the deadly ointment.

The puncture showed clearly in his thumb and the doctors were all agreed as to the instantaneous cause of death.

The Marchesa di Pesanti proved beyond any doubt that she was innocent of sending the casket and that her writing had been forged upon a stolen card.

The messenger who brought it up to Santa Lurina could not be traced. Pietro di Laga was in hiding. None doubted his guilt. Had he not

brazenly threatened the murdered Count?

But like the viper in the sand, he stung even from where he lay concealed. On the evening of the last day of the third week after his father's burial, Gian sought me in the noble library where I had so often sat with Sordello, and said that Antonio Revello had arrived at the little forest inn nine miles below the castle.

"For the fishing, signor. In May!"

The meaning of this staggered me and words would not come easily.

"You mean—Revello will try—to kill you?"

"In fair fight."

"Fair fight be damned!" I exploded, in English, this time.

The honest words were a relief against the nausea of Italian treachery, and because Gian's earliest efforts in our tongue have been the acquaintance of our oaths, he understood and even smiled.

"I shall not have a chance. I take your meaning, signor. I am no great swordsman. Even my father could not make me that, and he was the greatest of them all."

The lad's face looked haggard in the lamplight, but his voice was calm and his manner serene. In courage of soul he at least matched my dead friend.

"If I cannot find Pietro and have him punished before many days go by, I think I am likely to die.

"Therefore, dear signor, I ask you and the beautiful madonna, your wife, to befriend Maddalena. She is my ward as well as my betrothed, and I have written my wishes for her.

"Take her back to England, marry her to a brave, clean English gentleman, but before God and all his saints do not let her fall into the hands of Pietro di Laga, who has my father's death upon his blackened soul."

This I promised faithfully. My mind was sadly disturbed at his story and his manner deepened my anxiety.

I perceived that he really had solid doubt of hanging his cousin, and none at all of escaping Revello's blade.

It would need a visitant from heaven to direct his sword to save him, I reflected, and even in this land of superstition such a miracle could scarcely be expected.

A week passed quietly enough. Revello made no sign. The ladies stayed in the gardens.

Gian and I never left them for long, although the magic of the Italian spring called to us to roam farther afield and drink her glory. When we did leave them, a trusted guard kept unobtrusive watch.

The strain told upon the lovers and upon myself. Janet alone remained serene, confident in her God. Maddalena could scarcely bear to have her out of sight.

"You will save us," she said more than once, and even Gian did not grudge the time his inamorata gave to my wife.

What could we do? Pietro remained hidden and Gian's courage was too high to allow him to avoid Revello by leaving his house. Maddalena herself would not ask that of him.

It was pitiful to watch these two young creatures waiting for the danger which both scorned to flee.

IV

THE blow fell three days later, when Revello foistered a quarrel upon one of Gian's guards and gave the man a severe beating.

In this way he challenged the

young Count's interference on behalf of his servant.

"We must observe the rules," said Gian, white about the nostrils, and sent a request for the Cavalier Revello's attendance at the castle to explain the untoward occurrence.

He came, a quiet, sinister machine for destruction rather than a human being, and performed his rôle with a lack of personal interest that made the horror of him more nauseating than I can describe.

"The man annoyed me. I beat him," he said coldly.

"I do not suffer any man but myself to chastise my servants," said Gian.

The lad carried himself bravely. My heart warmed to him more than ever as he faced the certainty of death so gallantly. And I was waiting for my own chance to intercept the hovering challenge.

"I have to inform you, il Conti di Morona, that I shall beat any man's servants who offend me, and shall not wait upon other authority than my own."

Before Gian could answer the mechanical words, I had flung out my affront.

"You lie, signor. Come to England and beat one of my servants, and I will prove to you that you lie."

He scarcely flickered an eyelid at me.

"Your shield, signor count?" he said to Gian.

"My friend," said Gian quietly. "Enough of this farce, Revello. Signor Bardown will act for me. You will send your seconds to him."

The tone of his voice, the use of the surname without any title should have stung Revello's pride, but that it must have perished long ago. He made no sign.

Cold, impenetrable, uninterested, remorseless, he was no man, but only a shell, empty of all passions save avarice. He gave us a little stilted bow and turned to go.

At that moment, Maddalena and Janet stepped from the terrace through the long window into the room. Maddalena saw Revello, checked a cry and went to Gian's side.

My wife moved more fully into the room and looked at the master swordsman of Turin. The sunshine drenched her face with gold.

I saw Revello's eyes change, and I saw his right hand drop to his side in the gesture with which a man lowers his point in salute. In that moment Antonio Revello was afraid.

THEY met at dawn on the second day, this day upon which I write. The place was a smooth clearing among the trees, with one side open to the view of mountains and valleys stretching toward Turin.

Revello's second had place behind him. I stood behind Gian. The surgeon summoned by Gian from the city remained between us, a little apart under the trees.

The air was breathless, the sky gray and cold, waiting for the sun.

Unknown to Gian, Maddalena was concealed twenty yards away among the trees. Nothing could prevent her.

"If he dies, I must be with him," she said, with parched lips. "Do not fear, signor, that I shall betray my presence to unnerve him."

I had no power to stop her. I put my faith in Janet, who accompanied her, to control her.

But I need not have feared. She has the courage of her race, and from first to last she made no sign, even when it seemed plain that Gian must die.

The boy was no coward, but he was also no swordsman. Remem-

ber, too, the moral effect of Revello's sinister reputation.

The horror engendered by the man's inhumanity wrapped a cloak about him which was more protecting than any armor. If I felt this, what must it have been to the lad who had to fight him?

Revello fenced easily, even contemptuously, like a man taking preliminary practice before entering upon a serious contest.

His sword ran straight as a line, backward and forward as if fastidious to select some particular spot.

His wrist, turning with his forearm, pushed away Gian's blade without effort. His face was calm.

One might have described him as the beau ideal of a swordsman, if perhaps owing a trifle to age.

Gian, on the contrary, was fighting wildly. He had no mastery of his weapon. Moreover, he was conscious that in a few moments life would be over for him. Maddalena, love, activity, youth, and joy, all lost.

A groan rose to my lips as I watched, helpless to prevent this murder. It was then that I noticed Revello's friend start and look beyond where I stood, behind Gian.

Turning, I saw Janet in her white woolen wrap, the hood fallen back from her face. There was no sign of Maddalena.

Janet's eyes were fixed upon Revello and her lips moved silently.

Without uttering a word, she made him aware of her presence. For one second his eyes wavered in her direction and his hand faltered.

A better swordsman than Gian might have snatched an advantage, but the boy scarcely noticed the opening. What little knowledge of fencing he had ever acquired seemed to have vanished, and as Antonio suddenly forced his attack, Gian became hopelessly bewildered and gave ground.

Revello followed swiftly. They were close to Janet and myself now, but he paid no further heed to her.

Only as I watched him, I felt with a swordsman's intuition that his calm had been shaken and that he was fighting as one who is pushed for time, which was something no man had ever seen in him before.

Gian's breathing was coming painfully. He made mechanical thrusts and parries. I looked at Janet. Her lips still moved in prayer.

I looked back at Gian and caught my breath, for he was turning his head this way and that as if seeking outside succor.

Why did Revello's blade not make an end then? Did Janet's prayers stay it for just long enough to bring that other help?

V

MY pen faltered. I have had to lay it down again. An ague shook me as it might any man who has looked into the abyss men call death, and found it flowering in life.

I was waiting for the last thrust to lay Gian dead upon the ground, when suddenly a dimness of vision assailed me and the two men seemed to be fighting in a cloud.

Consciousness of immediate surroundings faded. Revello's second, the surgeon, Janet, trees and grass and sky disappeared.

I saw only the two men in their white shirts and black breeches, and the steel of their rapiers. And then, taking form and substance in the cloud, a third man who was none other than my dead friend Sordello di Morona himself.

While I stared, too greatly amazed to be frightened, the mist cleared,

the sunlight burst across the world and Count Sordello stood clear for all with eyes to see.

He glided up to his son, seemed to envelop him in his presence, then disappeared.

I rubbed my eyes, then looked again. No trace of the apparition remained.

I looked at Revello's second, at the surgeon. Both were unmoved. I glanced at Janet. Her eyes were full of mystery, but her lips smiled. She touched my arm and silently bade me attend to the fighting.

Antonio's thrust was still delayed and Gian appeared suddenly transformed. He looked older, more poised and the entire nature of his fencing had altered.

The wild, futile handling had given place to a brilliant mastery of his weapon. The blade ran in and out like a live thing. A new soul leaped into the flickering steel.

Revello felt the change and responded. He became vitally alert.

I will swear he looked astonished as his point was turned away, and that a faint satisfaction crossed his face as if he were glad to find matter for pride in his victory after all.

Again and again he attacked and each time was foiled. Gian was fencing like one inspired. With no hurry, no attack, but using the most perfect defence I ever hope to see. Revello employed every device to break it down, in vain.

Neither seemed to tire. It was a contest between two veritable princes of the art.

Antonio Revello one knew of old. But where had Gian di Morona learned to meet the maestro upon more than equal terms?

The second and the surgeon were gasping in astonishment. I heard Janet's quick breathing. I saw the doubt leap swiftly into Revello's face.

Gian abandoned defence. It was his turn to attack, and inch by inch he drove Revello back across the sward. His blade flickered like lightning.

The wrist play of both was something for a man to remember all his life. We, who watched, were privileged to see the greatest swordsman in Italy forced to defend his life, and as a spectacle of genius and courage it can never be equaled or surpassed.

It was impossible to follow every swift movement of head and wrist and body and foot. The fighters parted and met again, with blades clashing upon each other, bending, thrusting, rippling like two streaks of fire.

The eye grew dizzy in watching. Would they never tire? Each had drawn blood more than once from arm and cheek and throat.

But still they fought and still we watched, and forever in my brain throbbed the vision of Sordello di Morona, in white shirt and black breeches, as I had seen him five minutes since.

There came a pause at last. Both men drew back, breathing in distressed gasps, but with ever careful eyes on each other.

It was only for a moment. Revello sprang forward swiftly with a deadly thrust. But Gian parried and as he turned the other's point away I heard him speak.

"It is for the last time, Antonio Revello. My sword is charged with the anguish of those you have murdered. I deliver their message. . . . So . . . "

By my faith in Janet, I heard the words clearly. I do not know if Revello heard, but quite suddenly the mask of his face cracked and broke into horrible fragments of stark terror.

I will swear his soul shriveled

within him before ever the blade licked up his arm, beneath his guard, and ran through his breast. For one second he hung transfixed, then sagged and dropped.

And as Gian withdrew the steel, a woman's voice cried to him and Maddalena fainted upon his breast.

Then, in the one moment while we all remained motionless, I saw my dead friend, Gian's father, take form and substance about his son's figure, withdraw a pace, stand clearly defined in the sunlight—and disappear.

Antonio died in five minutes. Before he went he looked up into the face of Janet, who knelt beside him while the doctor tried to staunch the wound.

"Madonna! Your prayers brought him. Yesterday . . . my death . . . in your eyes."

He choked and died.

SO MUCH I wrote this morning in haste, before the memory dimmed. Since then I have talked with Gian.

He was dazed by what had happened. That he, the least of swordsmen, had killed Antonio Revello, was a marvel which numbed him in bewilderment.

"Signor, I do not understand at all. At every moment I felt myself outmatched. The terror of death compassed me.

"I remembered my father's skill and I think my soul in anguish called to him. Suddenly there rose within me a new knowledge. I understood in a flash all he had taught me.

"Then, a stranger thing happened. I fell, I think, into a trance wherein my soul slipped from my body and I stood apart, as it were, watching myself fight.

"I saw the astonishment leap into Revello's eyes as he recognized a master in one he had thought to kill so easily. Then I saw fear, Signor! The fear in his eyes! He might have been fighting against the dead.

"I saw my blade transfix him, *et per Dio et la Madonna,* I saw him fall. A cloud bewildered me. When it passed I was in the body again, wiping his blood from my sword."

He was so shaken that I deemed it wiser not to tell of my own vision. It might have distressed him even more.

I spoke to him as collectedly as I could, emphasized his overwrought condition and spoke of tricky nerves playing upon the imagination. One question only I permitted myself.

"You called something to Revello before you killed him. Do you remember what you said?"

He shook his head.

"I did not speak. I had no power of speech, and, moreover, there was nothing for me to say."

I have sent him to find comfort and peace with Maddalena, while I try to arrange my own thoughts.

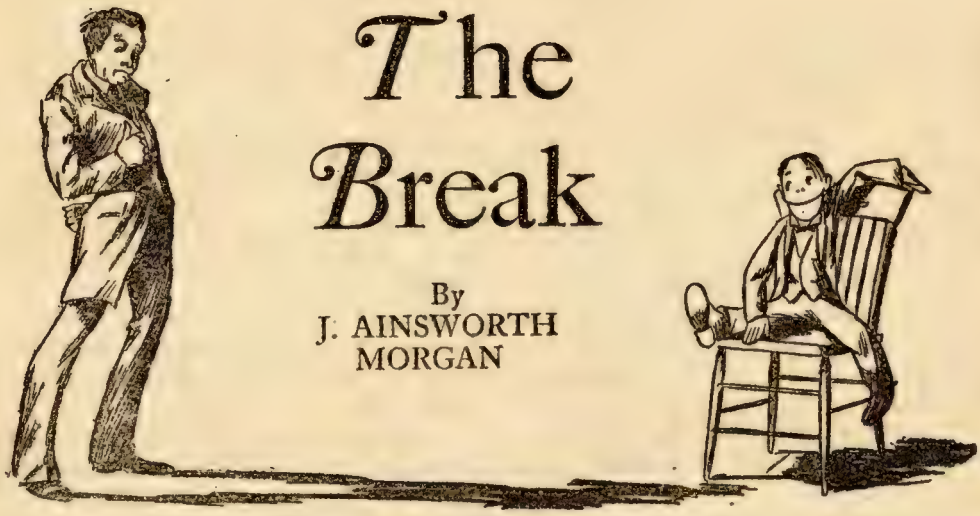
I also am shaken to the depths of my being. I have seen the dead return alive.

With the same, certain knowledge that I live, I know that the spirit of Sordello di Morona came back to earth to save his son.

A touch on my shoulder. Janet stood before me.

"You saw?" I whispered.

"I saw."



The Break

By J. AINSWORTH MORGAN

MIKE MURPHY, of the little known team of "Mike and Ike," felt just about primed to toss up the proverbial sponge and take the only free thing the world had left to offer him —a good inhalation of city gas.

It appeared to be the one remaining solution to the problem of life—to snuff it out and forever hide the mockery of existence.

Born to the profession, Mike had followed in the wake of his father as a small-town circuit vaudeville artist.

Once, in 1912, he nearly opened the show in a second rate Brooklyn house but, as Fate would have it, the artist whose place he had prayed to fill had mistaken acute indigestion for appendicitis and, unfortunately for Mike, realized his false diagnosis in time to keep his engagement.

Since then the nearest he had ever come to the thrilling yet unsympathetic glare of Broadway bulbs had been Scranton, Pa. And for the past nine months—in fact since that horrible night in Wheeling when the chair on which he was sitting broke and he went sprawling into the orchestra pit—he had never answered a call or seen the dust on a footlight.

It was the morning of the thirteenth, a rainy morning, presaging one of those winter days when dank misery seems to drip from every building and the gray canopy of heaven hangs over the city like the crêpe cover on a coffin.

Mike glanced first at the gas jet and then out the dirty, fly-specked window which separated him from the merciless chill of nature.

It was a toss-up; one was as inviting as the other. He had a quarter left in his pocket. Enough, he figured, for a cup of coffee and a cruller or a suitable tip for the person finding his body, to turn off the gas, open the windows and phone the police.

Which would it be? As the coin

was playing the leading rôle in this drama of life, better to let it speak its own lines without prompting. So Mike drew the coin out of his pocket and, holding it in the palm of his thin, unsteady hand, began studying it.

" 'In God We Trust'—a lady with a wreath around her head—one, two, three—huh! Thirteen stars. 1912. Nine and one is ten and one is eleven and two is thirteen—huh! Date adds up to thirteen, too!" he muttered, unconscious that he was speaking aloud. Then he turned the coin over.

" 'Quarter Dollar.' One, two, three, four—huh! Thirteen letters. An uncomfortable looking eagle sitting on the tip of his tail, holding arrows in one mitt, and, well, maybe a piece of fern in the other; a chest protector, made out of a shield; eatin' a strip of ribbon—with somethin' written on it—'E—E—Pluribus Unum.' One, two, three, four, five—geez! Thirteen letters again; and thirteen more stars over the bird's dome!"

Mike became morbidly interested in the repetition of thirteen for the reason that his name, Michael Murphy, had thirteen letters in it, too, and he had never been able to definitely decide whether that was a good omen or not.

"Hell's fire, though, who cares?" he said with a sigh of despair. "Heads the meal—tails the other!" and he flipped the coin.

"Heads! 'In God We Trust'!" The tiny letters on the top of the coin seemed suddenly to double in size, and Miss America, or whatever the lady's name was, smiled, just the tiniest bit, but she smiled. Mike was sure of this.

" 'In God We Trust'—how many letters had that? One, two, three—huh! Only twelve!"

But that wasn't exactly God's fault. It was his own fault—he had always just missed absolutely believing in God.

That was the reason *it* just missed having thirteen letters on that rainy morning of the thirteenth.

Well, he would give God another chance to be believed in. If He ever wanted to help anybody, and had the power, now was His opportunity.

Replacing the quarter in his pocket, Mike thumbed his nose at the gas jet, stuck his arms through the ripped lining of his shabby overcoat, grabbed his hat and descended four flights of creaking stairs.

THE rain had ceased! Was this another good sign or another of Fate's false alarms? Oh, well, he would trust in God for one whole day and see what happened.

If nothing went completely against him, if taxies didn't splash him with water at every turn, if people on the street didn't seem to bump into him on purpose, if he didn't lose the quarter before he got to a lunch counter, if the sun came out—he would give God a decent trial before he, again, considered cashing in life's balance.

Mike had a nickel to squander when he had finished his scant repast. Something, maybe the coffee, had stimulated him, so he blew himself to a cigar, put a new paper of matches in his pocket and lit his "stogie" from the ever-burn flame at the end of the counter.

As he strolled down Eighth Avenue, the thought occurred to him to drop in and see his old friend Joe Shapiro. Who could tell? Maybe Joe had found a job for him. He had before. Joe was a good agent and, besides an agent, Joe was a friend.

"Trust in God," he repeated to himself. Maybe Joe could help Him out.

Joe Shapiro's office was in one of

those new buildings in West 48th Street right next to that fashionable restaurant with the ironical name of "The Breakers."

A restaurant where residents of upper Fifth Avenue co-mingle with well-tailored thugs, to scoff at Mr. Volstead's pipe dream and to pay five dollars for the privilege of *not* being able to dance on a postage stamp. And two dollars for a fifteen-cent bottle of ginger ale to kill the taste of bad liquor at a dollar a short measure, this latter only if known socially by the owner of the establishment who, more than likely, recently completed a visit up the river for breeding illegitimate dollar bills.

Mike hesitated long enough in front of the Breakers to be measured from head to foot by the liveried doorman, and then with a qualm of envious hatred he entered the tall building next door.

It seemed all wrong that an artist, the best there was in his line (Mike frankly admitted there wasn't a team like "Mike and Ike" on the books) should be starving for want of work while a man who only had to know how to open a door and accept a tip should be flourishing in gold braid.

"Geez!" he muttered to himself, "a half-baked automaton having the nerve to give a real artist a dirty look!"

AT the tenth floor Mike thought of God again and, shrugging his shoulders, he dismissed the braided doorman from his mind and made his way to the offices of "Joseph Shapiro—Theatrical Agent."

"Well, if it ain't old Mike! Hy, kid, park th' old haunches and grab a weed; ain't seen you 'round for months." Joe Shapiro pushed a packet of Fatimas in front of Mike and then leaned back in his swivel chair to survey his friend.

"Come from a funeral, or are you understudyin' Hamlet?" asked Joe with some concern over the wan look in Mike's eyes.

"Naw, Joe, neither. Just fed up on markin' time and tryin' to grab meals out of th' air. Ain't had no work for nine months. Think of that, Joe—nine bloody months—long enough to raise a family and I can't even raise a dime.

"Geez! Joe, t'ain't fair me and my talent and little Ike all wastin' oursel's in lookin', lookin' and never findin'! Ain't there no chance, Joe, not even to open a show in Penns Neck?"

Mike lit a Fatima from the butt end of his nickel cigar as his eyes remained anxiously glued on Joe. There was something tragic in the expression of pleading which clouded his face.

Just a look of encouragement, a dim light of hope in Joe's eyes, that was all Mike asked of God at the moment.

Joe smiled a smile of sympathy.

"Never say die, kid!" he ventured, little realizing how much significance his trite remark carried, how near home it struck way down deep in Mike's inner self. And then he went on:

"The whole dope is, Mike, your stuff's got whiskers down to here," and he measured the distance from his second chin to the rim of a large brass cuspidor by his chair.

"Folks ain't gonna pay to see you and li'l Ike work out—t'ain't a question of talent nowadays, it's a question of public demand—and th' public seen your stuff when they was kids, with their grandmas.

"What they want is somethin' sensational, somethin' new; some guy who's in th' public eye, on th' front pages of all them dirty tabloids—'at's what they want!"

Mike squirmed in his chair.

"Geez! Don't I know, don't I know? All a dame's gotta do now to headline on Broadway is to bump some other dame's husband off with a crowbar and then get acquitted by a sap-head of a jury 'cause she proved th' guy called her wet!

"Geez, don't I know, don't I know? And all a feller's gotta do's to have enlarged lungs and fill hi'self full of air and float across a channel and he gets signed up at a grand a week 'til he's too old to talk.

"Don't I know, don't I know? Geez! it's turrible, there ain't no justice nowadays, no art no more!"

But Mike felt secretly ashamed of himself for giving away to his bitterness. It wasn't sportsman-like, so before Joe could speak he added:

"But whatsa use of grumblin'? It might be worse, maybe. I ain't sick, yet. Whatcha think, Joe, of th' chances of gettin' *some* sort of a break *some* time?"

Joe clasped his hands and twiddled his thumbs on top of his ample stomach.

"Poor kid," he thought, "don't blame him for gettin' sore on life," and then aloud, "I think I'm gonna find you a job, old-timer—maybe tourin' 'round th' sticks, but it'll be somethin' to fill in 'til th' public takes to your stuff again.

"You know, th' old pendulum will swing back some day and they'll be rearing to catch your stuff. Sure they'll go nuts over you, it'll be like hearin' old songs."

Joe had always tried to be an optimist and even though he wouldn't be able to fulfil his hopes, a few cheerful words would help Mike to buck up.

The cloud left Mike's face and he felt himself smiling for the first time in months.

"Geez! you're a helluva good egg, Joe, and don't kid yourself, I won't forget it, neither."

Mike was about to rise, but Joe sat him down again.

"Wait a minit, kid. Whatcha doin' later? Nothin'? Well, what about me and you havin' a real meal at the Breakers? 'Bout seven—O. K.?"

The thought of an honest-to-goodness feed at the Breakers; the thought of being able to brush by that swank of a doorman; the thought of being on the *in*side looking out, for once!

"Say, you're on, Joe. Geez! I'd love to. Seven o'clock. Meet you outside. K. O. Put it there, old-timer!" And Mike departed with cushions of air under his shoddy feet.

"WHAT a great help a few kind words are when a feller's S. O. L.," thought Mike as he headed toward Broadway.

The world, already, seemed a less sordid place and he found himself unconsciously nodding to the braided doorman as he passed the Breakers. Looking down Forty-eighth Street, his lightened heart gave a few extra beats when he saw a huge, dull red ball about to sink behind the Jersey skyline. It was the sun, and the sun was trying its darndest to shine on *him*—Mike Murphy—before it retired for the night.

Had Mike been on any other street but Forty-eighth, he would have been unable to receive and appreciate the homage which Nature was paying him.

For the first time in his thirty-eight years of life Mike Murphy wondered. Wondered who steered that sun so that it was framed at the end of Forty-eighth Street; or who built Forty-eighth Street so that it framed the setting sun. Or, if you like, who put him, Mike, in that street, to notice this phenomenon, on this day of days?

He thought of the little coin,

thought for a number of seconds, then, reverently, he bowed his head —ever so little—to Him who must have done all three.

When he reached Broadway Mike turned to the left only to see the electric sign, over the Palace Theatre, switched on with all its blaze of lights.

He stood motionless, his eyes all but closed, and for one brief moment he peeked through his lashes and allowed his imagination to run riot. He could see it plainly:

MIKE AND IKE

in the largest letters, right in the middle of the sign. Then, like awakening from a trance, he blinked the vision away and faced life's reality with new courage and chin in the air.

He and Ike would change their act, get something new, something that appealed to the public. Who wanted to see old stuff, anyway! Joe was right. Joe knew that he was an artist as well as he knew it himself; but he must direct his art to keep up with the times.

Didn't he know, didn't he know? You don't get caviar from letting raisins shrink!

At dinner he and Joe would talk over a new act. Joe was plumb full of brains and would get an awful kick out of helping old Mike.

Anyhow, wasn't it to Joe's advantage to put Mike over big? Wouldn't he drag down his commission? Sure! Every buck in old Mike's pocket was a dime in Joe's. A dime in every dollar, without being an artist!

Of course a new act might mean having to break off with little Ike. But Ike had had his day; he'd done his stuff and was getting pretty old anyway. But Mike would never forget him, never cast him out.

They'd shared many heart aches, many one-night stands, many frosty receptions from dumb audiences; but, too, they'd shared the thrill of nearly playing Brooklyn, once! That was in 1912.

"Geez!" said Mike suddenly to himself, "1912!" That was th' date of that quarter—nineteen twelve—well, I'll be a son-of-a-so-forth!"

PAINFULLY on the dot of seven o'clock Mike was standing in front of the Breakers.

"Looks like it'll be fine tomorrow," he ventured, by way of breaking the ice between himself and the elegant door-opener. But in the latter, skepticism reigned supreme.

"Whatcha hangin' 'round here for, anyway?" he said, without any attempt to appear interested in the elements.

Mike quickly decided that it was beneath his dignity as an artist to put himself on the same level with this ignorant man by losing his temper, so, with Erin subtlety, he replied:

"Waitin' for Mr. Shapiro—if, by any chance, he knows *you!*"

From the change in the doorman's attitude, Joe had doubtless given him many quarters.

"Oh! Beg your pardon, sir. Yes, sir, looks like a good day in store for tomorrow."

But before he could ingratiate himself any further in Mike's estimation, Joe waddled into the picture and took his friend by the arm.

Because seven o'clock was unfashionably early for the Breakers to be filled with its more elect patrons, Mike and Joe enjoyed the privilege of taking their choice of tables.

A girl who, unquestionably, had found the checking business safer to her virtue than the chorus, took their coats and hats from them and hung them on the racks by the door.

The proprietor of the establish-

ment, a thin, foreign man with black mustache and small Van Dyke, known to Joe as Leo, assisted them with much suavity of manner. That table over there in the far corner was a good one, from there they might watch the more famous (or infamous) customers arrive.

"Là bas, au coin? Parfaitement, Messieurs!"

Leo led them, with a flourish, across the open dance-floor as Mike silently reveled in the attention shown him.

It was a new sensation. A brilliant departure from the more accustomed sound of, "Wreck two on a raft!" as he sat at a greasy counter on Eighth Avenue.

"Voilà, Messieurs!"

And as they sat down Leo pushed the table in after them.

Joe hesitated at nothing in ordering. From cocktails through liqueurs and coffee, Leo scribbled down a menu fit for the gods.

"There! That oughta pad your slats, kid!" Joe said as he settled back on the couch and then, noticing a large table smothered in flowers to their immediate left, remarked:

"Christmas! Pipe th' splurge! There must be another publicity queen in town bein' given a bust by a face-cream king!"

"No, sir, that is for Mrs. Wellington Peabody and her party," corrected Leo with evident pride in his voice.

What an insult to have mistaken Mrs. Wellington Peabody for a royal advertisement!

Mike could wait no longer to announce his recent decision to change his act.

"Joe, I come around to your way of thinkin' after I seen you this afternoon. You got th' dope, my stuff's flyblown. Me and you are gonna work out somethin' new—right here tonight.

"Maybe it'll mean puttin' little Ike on th' shelf, but what th' public wants is somethin' startlin', somethin' with a kick in it. Don't I know, don't I know?

"Now jest supposin' me and you get together and dope out somethin' with a wow of a plot. Snappy lines, you know, endin' with a big bang!

"All I need's th' horse to ride and I can put him over the jumps. My art ain't one track. Sure as you're livin', if I get th' goods I can put 'em over big—and at th' Palace, too.

"There ain't no flies on old Mike. Not, not after seein' that sun smilin' at me as he snook over th' Jersey skyline tonight.

"I tell you, Joe, I feel a feelin' that my candle ain't blown out yet. Geez! t'ain't never been lit 'cause I never had faith in—in—well, in myself and everythin', before."

Mike felt a little embarrassed at bringing God on the scene so soon. Joe might think him coo-coo. Better to just talk plain business and keep God a secret inside himself, something to act like fuel for his ideas, like a spare tank of gas. He had just found that spare tank that day; never knew he had it before.

"Whatcha say, Joe? With your brains and my art we sure oughta dope somethin', me and you."

Joe was noticeably impressed at Mike's new lease on life.

"You got th' right spirit, old pal. Never heard you talk more sensible. I knew you had it in you, and I'm gonna help you, too.

"But we'll do much more after we feed our faces; you know, food for thought."

At this moment Leo dashed toward the door. A large party was arriving; all were in full evening dress.

With many bows and scrapes Leo assisted them with their wraps, overcoats and hats and then ushered

them, with much Latin ceremony, to the flower-laden table.

Mrs. Wellington Peabody—tall, aristocratic and consciously unconscious of her ropes of pearls and bejeweled fingers—placed her guests with grace and dignity. There were ten in all; five couples, representing at least two hundred feet frontage on Central Park.

Mike nudged Joe just as Joe nudged Mike.

"Never seen so many pearls drippin' off o' five necks!" said Mike with dilated pupils.

Leo ordered his waiters in every direction as he stood like a Lord Chamberlain by the side of his queen, Mrs. Wellington Peabody. New arrivals he ignored, leaving them to the lesser care of his subordinates.

By nine-thirty, by the time Mike and Joe had smacked their lips over a soothing Benedictine and sighed with complete Epicurean satisfaction, the Breakers was at its height of revelry. Every table was occupied.

The open dance floor, during the intermission of the music, looked for all the world like a toy boxing ring in the middle of an overcrowded sheet of fly paper. And the gobble of voices sounded like the buzzing of so many flies' wings.

EVERYONE seemed happy, when, suddenly, from the direction of the door, there arose a piercing scream.

The gabble of voices ceased. All eyes turned toward the entrance, toward the hat girl, who rushed into the middle of the dance-floor, ashen white in the artificial light, her hands raised over her head.

Close behind her were two men, each with a black handkerchief across his face, a cap pulled down over his eyes and a gun in his hand.

"Lock that door and then come 'ere!" ordered the foremost man to his accomplice as he kept the gun leveled at the room in general and the terrified girl in particular.

"One more squawk outta you and yuh get plugged," he warned the girl, who immediately saved herself the risk by falling limply to the floor in a dead faint.

"Everybody stick 'em up and push down to that end table, and keep your traps closed. Cover th' left side, Pete, and I'll cover th' right. Don' let nobody get behind yuh!"

Several women muffled their screams with the aid of napkins and at least two followed the example of the hat girl and toppled off their chairs in a mid-Victorian swoon.

Slowly the two bandits herded the terror-stricken crowd toward Mrs. Peabody's table. Two hundred or more hands, visibly trembling, churned the smoky atmosphere over pale, frightened faces.

Arriving at the Peabody table, the leading gangster poked the dignified hostess between the ribs with the barrel of his gun.

"Dump them beads and rocks on th' table, all o' youse dames. One wise crack an' yuh won't see tomorrow. Come on, snap to it. We ain't gonna touch you other birds, so keep yuh shirts on and yuh mitts up—tha's all!"

A certain amount of relief passed over all the people save Mrs. Peabody's party. But as the women at her table glanced at the glistening weapon in front of them, they placed their respective jewels in the center of the table without words.

"Come on! This ain't no slow movin' pitcher—hop to it!" And the leader contributed another black-and-blue mark on the aristocratic side of Mrs. Wellington Peabody.

Rage ran rampant but shackled in

the veins of the men. The slightest move on their part might spell instant tragedy, for bandits as daring as these appeared were no amateurs at their profession.

Mike looked out of the corner of his eyes only to shudder at the ghastly pallor of Joe's countenance. Mike himself was trembling; he knew it because he could hear his own teeth knocking against each other, but it was not fear. What had he to lose? Nothing but a very good dinner, and the bandits were not after food.

The picture of the little coin loomed up before his eyes—a regiment of thirteens marched before his vision and the large globe of lights in the center of the room took on the dull red hue of the setting sun.

"In God We Trust!" he said to himself.

THEN like a clap of thunder amid the death-like silence of a cemetery, a shrill voice issued from the other side of the room. It came from the vicinity of the checking stand by the door, which stood burdened with wraps, coats and hats, like so many limp, motionless figures.

"Stick 'em up yourself! Put them guns down on that table or you'll be a couple o' lead mines—I been waitin' for this—come on, up with 'em! Snap to!"

For a short moment Mike thought the leader of the gang was going to whirl about and face the door, but another threat from the hidden voice:

"Drop them gats! I give yuh three. One, two——" and the two bandits placed the guns on Mrs. Peabody's table. Before a clock could tick, Mike had made a hand spring and clutched a weapon in each fist.

Triumphant, he covered his victims and ordered Joe to search them. Half in a trance, and obeying more through impulse than courage, Joe did as he was bid, the color slowly returning to his fat face.

An audible sigh of relief passed around the room and a muttered jumble of things were said as Mike drove the two bandits to the center of the dance-floor.

"Somebody unlock that door and get the cops. I'll entertain these bimboes. Ladies, redecorate yourselves, Mike Murphy's lookin' after you!"

One of the musicians dashed out of the door and before the majority of the people could collect their wits and say anything intelligible, two policemen had arrived on the scene.

"All you folks stop gabberin' at once and keep quiet, please," commanded one of the officers as he placed bracelets of another description around the two men's wrists.

The crowd gathered about the edge of the dance-floor.

"Where's Leo?" asked someone. But no Leo appeared.

Then Mike, without waiting for orders from the officers, ripped the handkerchief from the leader's face. He had been looking at his eyes for some seconds.

There stood Leo—minus his mustache and Van Dyke.

"Leo!" ejaculated one of the officers, "well I'll be a watchamacallit—if it ain't Emile Perdue, alias 'The Frog'—wanted for murder—wanted so bad there's five thousand bucks on him!

"And who's yuh buddy, Froggy?" and at that he pulled the handkerchief off the other man—none other than the braided door opener—the ignorant man in front of the Breakers who had given Mike, the artist, that dirty look just a few hours before.

Mike couldn't resist an opportunity which was offered him on a golden platter.

"Whatcha hanging 'round here for, anyway," he said, but Mike alone enjoyed the full value of the remark.

"SAY, where's the bird 'at cornered these babies? He sure struck a gold mine!"

The policeman, with eager eyes, glanced from one bystander to the other.

So many things had happened in such a few minutes, so great had been the tension of the crowd that they had not yet attempted to produce the owner of the hidden voice.

They had completely overlooked, in their excitement, the unknown hero who had dropped from heaven, so unaccountably, at the moment of crisis.

But Joe Shapiro now stepped to the fore, leading Mike Murphy—a shabbily dressed man, thirty-eight years old, who was crying and laughing at the same time—who was alternately burning with embarrassment and bursting with pride. Joe addressed an eager audience:

"Officers and ladies and gentlemen, this man here, by name Michael Murphy, by profession the greatest ventriloquist in th' country, is th' gentleman who caught your prisoners. By projectin' his voice to th' other side of th' room he——"

But so great became the confusion of congratulations, handshakes, slaps on the back, that the rest of Joe's speech of introduction was drowned out.

Mike doesn't remember much of what happened the rest of that night. It all seemed like some fantastic dream and his comprehension was numbed, his realization of the turn of events stupefied.

Vaguely he remembers various cameramen asking him to "look this way"; numerous demands for his address; repeated handclasps and proffered flasks.

But it wasn't a dream. Perhaps it was something like dreams Mike had had, for he had many of fame, but if it was, the apparently impossible had happened..

A dream had come true.

The following morning every New York newspaper heralded his accomplishment. His photograph on all the front pages betrayed his dazed condition, especially the one showing him shaking hands with Mrs. Wellington Peabody.

"Mike Murphy and the Dowager of Fifth Avenue touchin' flesh, can you tie that?" he asked Joe.

As he reclined on his rickety bed that morning of the 14th, with Joe pacing the floor, bubbling over with ideas for his future, the sun kept its promise of the evening before and flooded his tiny room with its golden beams.

"I got it!" Joe burst out of a sudden. "It's a knockout, a headliner, pure 'n' simple. Nothin' to it. Why, hells-fire, kid, we'll write th' thing just as it happened.

"A drop in th' beginnin' to show you out o' work, fed up on life, then meetin' me, th' scene in th' restaurant, the whole bloomin' works just like took place.

"Why, boy, I can book it 'fore we write it, at a grand a week, too. Th' people'll go nuts over it, seein' somethin' 'at really happened, 'at's in every paper in th' country.

"Geez! Kid, you got th' break of your life. I'll tell th' cockeyed world you have—can't you see it, all lit up in lights as big as grape fruit:

MICHAEL MURPHY

in

———THE BREAK———

"By crimeny! We can sell it as an act—a big act—in a Broadway show. What d'y know, what d'y know?"

Mike had absorbed all that Joe

said—in his subconscious mind—but, consciously, he was watching those dancing rays of sunlight flicker over the drab, dirty, flowered wall paper.

"Look, Joe, the flowers seem almost alive in that sunlight!"

"Sunlight hell! That's gold, kid, pure gold pourin' into your life, that's what it is!"

Mike smiled. It was too sacred a thing to tell Joe where that gold came from.

BUT before the week was out, money—real, tangible money—rolled into Mike's life. More money than he ever imagined could roll his way, for not only did he receive the reward of five thousand dollars for the apprehension of the bandit known as "The Frog," but another check, for the same amount, arrived most unexpectedly from Florence Hope Peabody.

Accompanying it was a card: "With grateful thanks."

A few days later Mike sat in a comfortable room of a Broadway hotel. He was nervously turning over the pages of the morning paper. Finally his eyes focused on an announcement:

THRILLING ACT TO BE NEW FEATURE IN CARLTON'S "ANTICS"

Joseph Shapiro, the well-known agent, is the author of a one-act melodrama which is soon to be introduced into the new edition of Eddie Carlton's "Annual Antics." The act will feature Michael Murphy, who has recently graduated from vaudeville to the legitimate stage.

The name of the piece is to be "The Break," but further than being told that it is a thriller of the first order—the plot of which is said to be taken directly from a dramatic incident in the varied career of Mr. Murphy—we know little.

After innumerable readings, Mike put the paper down, rose slowly from his chair, and went over to the large bureau in the corner.

From the bottom drawer he carefully lifted out the figure of an absurd little man, a dummy, about three and a half feet high.

The face was set with a grinning expression; its broad mouth accentuated its high cheek-bones and wide-open eyes stared blankly into the nowhere.

Like a fond mother with her child, Mike carried the little man to the sofa and with as much care sat him on his knee tenderly.

He tidied the touseled mop of red hair, dusted off two shoddy little shoes with a clean pocket handkerchief and then looked into those wide, blank eyes.

"Ike, old pal, we've been through hell together. We've suffered and cried and gone hungry together. But we're out in th' open now, out where the sun is shinin' and th' birds are singin', out among th' flowers where people are laughin', where we can laugh and—and be happy, too.

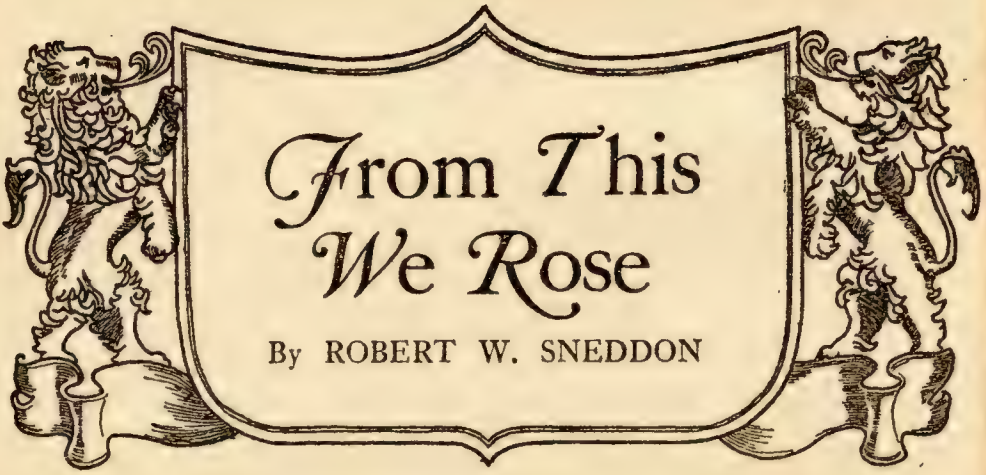
"Now, li'l feller, ain't you gonna thank old Mike, ain't you gonna thank him for bringin' you out of th' muck of existence into th' beauty of life? Whatcha say, whatcha say, Ike, old-timer?"

The grotesque little head seemed to droop in meditation. Gradually, very gradually, its comic mouth started moving. Its lips seemed to quiver, to hesitate, possibly in search of the right thing to say, something that wouldn't hurt Mike's feelings.

But Mike had to be put in his place. Finally it spoke, but falteringly, as though it were trying to stifle some great emotion.

"Whatcha mean? Whatcha mean, thank *YOU?* You ain't done it, Mike Murphy—it—it was—GOD!"

And then the little tousled head fell, limp, onto Mike Murphy's shoulder, and no one will ever know which one was crying.



From This We Rose

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

OCH, the cave-dweller, stepped suddenly upon a sharp thorn with his naked foot, and dropping his rude bow, uttered a bellow of rage.

It was an unfortunate moment for him. He was dead tired with the fury of the chase, which he had pursued without halt for many hours, and to his dull mind the presence of the thorn in his path was only another instance of that secret misfortune which his posterity have named "bad luck."

He threw himself down among the high ferns, and turning up the sole of his foot, drew out the thorn in silence and crushed it up in his powerful fingers.

This done, he looked once more at his sole, passed his wet finger over it, and grunted. Then, picking up his short bow, he rose slowly to his feet, shifted the shaggy auroch hide which covered his body and resumed his march.

Grimacing and grinding his teeth, he struck savagely at the branches which hampered his progress. The red sun was trembling on the edge of the sky as if uncertain to say good night. The air was softly stirred by the breath of eventide.

Had Och been an artist, he might have stopped to admire the dark silhouette of the hills, but being only a hunter, he moved as swiftly as he could toward where a thin finger of smoke seemed to beckon him.

When he came to the entrance of the cave, he sniffed and stopped with a puzzled air. A dog ran out suddenly and raised its head, ready to break into a wild bark, but his master muttered to him, and the dog hung its head and fawned upon him silently.

He advanced softly into the deep cave, treading carefully on the sharp flints with which the entrance was plentifully bestrewn.

At the back Ge, his wife, was sitting crouched over the fire, and something in her submissive attitude reminded him vaguely of the day when, having vanquished all rivals, he had dragged her from the cave of her father, the long-armed Sku.

The firelight glinted on her coarse red hair. Her lips moved, and he wondered.

Rubbing his eyes, for the smoke was thick in the cave, he saw another female figure crouched beyond the fire, and he was strangely troubled. Who might it be?

He peered once more and checked a snarl, as he recognized the wife of Sku who thus dared to break the tribal custom which forbade the presence of a mother-in-law in the house of her daughter's husband.

Had he felt less tired, and he was tired, for ox, reindeer and elk alike had escaped his fleet foot and twanging bow that day, he would have leaped forward, but something warned him to be cautious.

Women were curious creatures without habit or custom of action. They bowed their back to the club, but after the beating, there was that in their eye which could not be recognized or read.

A CURIOSITY as to what the pair were saying filled his mind, and without shame Och crept forward on hands and knees and, controlling his breathing, lay on his belly behind a spur of rock.

At first he could hear but scraps, but as his ear grew accustomed to the sound, he could make out what was being said. The wife of Sku was speaking much, her skinny forefinger raised.

"Where is the man?" she asked.

Ge stirred the embers with a pointed stick before she answered slowly:

"Hunting. He does nothing else. There is nothing else for a man to do."

"Except when he beats you," said the wife of Sku, bending forward.

Ge's breath came faster.

"He only does that when—when——"

"When he comes home without slaying—when the meat is not to his liking—when he is tired of you —when——"

"Sometimes when he feels kindly toward me, I think," said Ge in a low voice.

The wife of Sku laughed contemptuously.

"Think not too much of his kindness."

"Sometimes I am afraid of him," said Ge, twining her arms about her knees.

"Does the man know of your fear?"

"I do not know."

"Ah, you tremble and shake. You girls have no more idea what to do than the dog at the cave mouth. He beats you because he is on fire for you, and he beats you because he is angry with you. Where is the difference?"

"There is. I know there is," murmured Ge.

"You are a fool," said her mother. "I wonder why I ever had the bearing of you. Have you ever seen my man beat me? Answer me that."

"But are we not made for their pleasure?" asked Ge.

"I wonder," answered the old woman, "if your daughter will say the same, for this can not always be. Things must change.

"When I was a girl we made fire with a flint. Now we have the fire bow which turns a stick that lights of itself.

"I tell you, oh, I have other thoughts than those of hunting, eating, and the bearing of the pain, and I tell you we shall yet have men to do our bidding. Have you ever beaten him with his own club?" she asked suddenly.

Ge shuddered and looked around her. Och hugged the ground and half closed his eyes. Their talk

passed over his head, and he felt wearied.

What was the old woman saying —saying things he could not understand? She had wisdom, wisdom born of age, and he was but a young man. His muscles were firm, and his eye clear as the day he had first plunged a tiny spear into the body of the cave tiger his father had just killed.

"Why don't you give him what he gives you?" asked the old woman, leaning forward and laying a thin, wiry hand on her daughter's rounded arm, with its bracelet of wolf's teeth.

"How?" asked Ge.

"How? You are no longer a child. The great white light has crawled over the earth many times since I bore you. Why do you not tonight when he comes home, if he comes without flesh, beat him. Yes, beat him."

"I—I——" gasped Ge.

"I will help you. You are afraid. Would you keep him to yourself? Then do as I say. There are other women, and when he tires of you——"

Ge gave a half-sob.

"Yes, when he tires of you, when you have born the pain many times, and are ugly even as I, he will drive you out among the beasts.

"Because he beats you, he is master. And because he beats you, you, too, must beat him. That is the way to keep him. Be master, too. Beat Och, I tell you."

Och rose suddenly to his feet and staggered blindly into the midst of the smoke that made his eyes smart.

His naked foot, still sore from the thorn wound, trod upon a hot ember, and with a snarl he kicked Ge upon the thigh.

She moved submissively, clutching her breasts, but the old woman sprang to her feet and showed her pointed teeth in a hiss of defiance.

"Bear!" she cried. "Bear!"

Och looked at her, then, with a sudden perception of his power and his anger, struck her on the shoulder. The old woman toppled over, and with the instinct of cub for dam, Ge snatched up a sharp flint and drew it down Och's leg.

OCH gazed at his woman stupidly, then struck her a sharp blow with the bow he still held in his hand.

The dog, who had crept in, whined dismally and licked the trickle of blood on his master's leg.

The old woman rose to her feet, her eyes narrowed with hate, and seizing the stake with its glowing red point, advanced upon Och.

He glared at her and raised his bow, but before the blow reached the old woman, Ge had encircled his legs with her arms, and the man fell heavily.

With a scream like a beast's, the wife of Sku struck him as he lay, and kicking the bow which had fallen out of his reach, continued to belabor him.

Ge hesitated, and then as the memory of scores of beatings rushed through the cave of her mind, seized a spear of hardened wood and struck the man heavily across the shoulders.

Och groaned and struggled to his feet. A shower of blows from both women assailed him, and in pain he turned and ran. His limbs smarted all over. He groped for the patch of gray light at the cave entrance, every sense dulled to reason, his brain seething with rage.

That women should beat him, a man. That he should run before them. He had no thought of these things. All that concerned him was to take his weary body somewhere

out of reach of this whirlwind of blows and sleep.

He ran, till at last, stumbling over some hard object which rolled under his foot, he fell and lay breathing heavily.

Looking up through the tall fern fronds, he saw dimly the tiny fire spots in the great roof twinkling, and as he closed his eyes, the far-off trumpeting of a mammoth was like a voice bidding him sleep, and he slept.

The sun was already stepping over the hilltops, and a wildcat which had been watching the motionless figure slipped away, when Och threw out his arms and yawned loudly. As he opened his eyes he groaned and stretched his limbs. He was still sore and an incautious movement made him screw up his face in a grimace.

As the sun's warmth increased, he closed his eyes again. The undergrowth about him was alive with a thousand noises of insects and creeping creatures.

Suddenly, irritated by an insect, he kicked out his foot and touched something round. In fear he jerked back his foot and drew a frightened breath, then sat up prepared to kill the snake. As he looked at the object of his fear, something like a grin wrinkled his features, and he emitted a grunt.

Slowly he reached out his hand and picked up a round white bone, the shank of some animal, dried in the sun. In his childish interest in the bone, all thought of his pains left him. He forgot Ge, his wife, the wife of Sku, and their revolt.

He lay with his back against a rock and looked long at the bone, wondering what he might make of it—weapon, ornament or domestic implement.

The bone was hollow and tapered at one end, and putting it to his mouth he blew through it gently, taking pleasure in the soft sound.

A sudden idea took possession of him, and he drew out his fire drill, the little stick with the hard point, the short bow with the loose cord, and set the stick in the twist of the hide string.

Setting the point of the stick against the bone, and the other end against the stone ornament on his breast, he bent and began to saw the bow rapidly.

The bone and stick began to smoke, and a trickle of perspiration formed on his brow. All at once there was a crack and he stopped. The bone threatened to split. He thought for a little.

A plant with wide, dry leaves grew near him, and taking several of the leaves he stuffed them into the end of the bone, pressed them in with the stick, and once more began to twirl the bow, but with more care.

Soon the smoke began to rise, and the stick pierced one side of the bone. Och redoubled his efforts, and the leaves within the bone began to smolder.

He sniffed the odor and, extracting his drill, held the bone to his nose and smelled. The odor was fragrant and pleased him.

He put the thin end of the shank to his lips and blew strongly. A queer fancy to experiment took him and timorously he drew the smoke into his mouth. It made him cough, and he exhaled a great puff of white vapor.

Och looked at the bone eagerly. Never had he felt such a sensation. It was inexplicable that the breath of this smoke should stir him to such pain—or was it pleasure? He must try it again.

Slowly and with infinite precaution he put the bone to his lips once more and sucked its narrow end. His eyes half closed. He

coughed no more as he breathed in the smoke.

He had forgotten his aches, forgotten hunger and forgotten passion. He was wandering on wide plains, with feet that knew no weariness, where cave bear and tiger, reindeer, ox and elk fell without resistance before his arrows and his flint-pointed spear.

Och was having the first pipe dream. The clouds of smoke encircled his head. His eyelids crept down over drowsy eyeballs. His chin sank upon his breast and he slept again.

MEANWHILE, in the cave, there were other doings.

Ge, the wife of Och, was astir after a night of broken sleep. Time and again she had stretched out her hand in the darkness and felt no one near her, and it disquieted her.

Her mother had taken her own way, in spite of her daughter's pleadings, for it had not taken Ge long to realize the importance of the step she had taken in asserting herself.

Ge loved her brutal mate. He was after all her protector against wild beast and man. Therefore, it was in fear and trembling of what she had done that she tossed upon the skins on the cave floor, and cried silently to herself.

The cave was so dark, and prowling animals outside might scent human flesh within.

True, she could handle a bow, and spear as well, but what availed that when Och, the brawny, whose muscles were hard to the touch, could without a tremor or effort drive home the pointed stake.

Once she woke and gave a cry as her hand touched something shaggy, but she remembered it was the dog that lay near.

Dawn came and the first rays of light sought out the cave. Ge sat up. Och was not there, and a wild unreasoning fear fell upon the woman.

She began to picture him crushed in the terrible shaggy embrace of a bear, or dashed against a tree by the whipping coil of a mammoth's trunk.

Perhaps some of the evil things that prowled the darkness, of which the old women whispered over the embers, had carried him away.

When once she had conceived this idea nothing could keep her still. She went to the cave mouth and looked out, crying his name again and again, but no one answered.

The dog ran about her feet, whining, for there is that sense in the dog which men may not understand. It tugged at the skin which hung about her and would not be comforted.

With a swift resolution she snatched up her bow and a handful of arrows and ran with all her speed to the neighboring cave where some others of the tribe lived.

They were not up and astir, and the hearth fires were almost dead. She called the name of her mother, and the wife of Sku came out blinking.

"Where is my man?" cried Ge savagely. "What have you done with him? He has not come home. Some beast is now tearing his skin. Ah, the skin of him!"

The wife of Sku looked at her strangely, for her eyes were aflame and she panted with running.

"He is sleeping in the woods," she said slowly.

"He is torn by beasts," cried Ge. "Is there none will help me to find him, for I would place stones over his body and put his weapons with him. Oh, the great arm and the shaggy head of him that I shall see no more!"

"Peace, daughter," said the old woman. "You cry too loud. You are young, it is plain to see. There are other men. But see, if it will ease you, I and the man and some of the others will go with you and seek Och."

Calling them all unwillingly from their sleep, she told them and they took their weapons. Sku and the wife of Sku, and Ka of the yellow hair, than whom there was none finer or stronger in those parts, and two other men.

"How shall we find him?" asked Ge.

"Have you not the dog?" said Sku, who had wisdom. And as he spoke, the dog raced past with hanging tongue. "Now follow him."

And they followed the dog.

IN THE forest glade Och had wakened again, and catching a rabbit had devoured it raw, for a hungry man has no need of fires.

Then he was minded to try his marvelous bone once more, and it was not long before the smoke rose about him in clouds, and he had forgotten all in his daze.

Through the trees silently came the party. Ge and the wife of Sku in advance, the three men behind, and the eyes of Ka were upon the shape and the swift rippling muscles of Ge. And it was in this wise that there came upon Och almost hidden by a thick cloud of smoke.

The wife of Sku bit her fingers into the arm of Ge.

"Look!" she said with shaking voice.

Ge looked and shuddered.

"I knew it well," she said. "The evil things that dwell in the woods have taken him. See, there is the shape of Och, but there is fire within him. The evil thing in the flame that burns."

She trembled, her knees giving way beneath her. The men whispered among themselves and drew back.

The wife of Sku clutched her daughter's arm and shook her.

"Shoot!" she said hoarsely. "Shoot, wife of Och!"

"I cannot," cried Ge, "I cannot!"

"Would you have the thing go and come among us, devouring in the night?" said her mother. "Shoot!"

Ge, with a sigh, fitted an arrow to her bow-string and, leveling the weapon, drew the string taut. The shaft sped, and Och, opening his eyes to the first consciousness of their presence, lay back with a convulsive kick, his heart transfixed by the arrow.

"There," said Sku fearfully. "The evil thing is no more. Come away. It is plain that Och has fallen prey to it. Let us never come near this spot when we hunt, lest the lurking thing spring upon us."

As they turned away, the smoke rose about Och, for the ash from the weed in the bone had fired the grass about.

"Where is the dog?" asked Ge.

"I know not," answered the wife of Sku. "It was a foolish creature, anyway. You are better without it. Come, hurry, smile and Ka shall take you to wife."

Ge shook her head, but when she looked at the yellow hair of Ka, the great hunter, whose muscles were like cords, the idea was not so unpleasant.

She quickened her pace with a backward glance, and her heart trembled as she saw Ka stride after her. She began to run gently, then with increased speed as the hunter followed in pursuit.

As she felt his hot breath upon the nape of her neck, a tremor ran through her and her limbs relaxed. She hesitated, and his hand fell

upon her shoulder, biting into the flesh.

He spun her around and she met his eyes, greedy with desire. His mighty arms encircled her, but as he bent her earthward, a crushing blow fell upon his shoulder.

Flinging aside the woman, Ka wheeled to meet his attacker. Facing him was Hor, who had single-handed slain the sabre-tooth tiger, one rip from whose claw was death.

Snarling and biting, the newcomer threw himself upon Ka and coiled legs and arms about him in a strangling embrace.

Ge stood aside with distended eyes, staring at the mass which rolled hither and thither, with cracking of joints and straining of sinews. A dull groaning escaped from Ka as his ribs yielded, and his muscles rose beneath the skin. A slaver of froth fell upon him from the jaws of the monster who weighed him down.

Suddenly Ge gave a shrill cry, and, drawing a flint knife from her pouched garment of skin, threw herself upon the monster's back and drove it home again and again between the upraised shoulder-blades.

With a jerk she drew her hand away from the snapping jaw of the monster and sprang back. And as she did so Ka, with a mighty heave, cast off his burden and, rolling sideways, scrambled to his feet.

Snatching up a heavy stone, he raised it over his head and dashed it with all his force upon the head of his fallen enemy. Hor's limbs sprawled out, he gave a convulsive tremor, and was still.

The two who stood erect looked at each other, then once more Ge began to run, and Ka followed. They were lost to sight among the tall ferns.

But in the forest glade the dog ran to and fro whimpering about the body of Och, beside which still smoldered in the grass the first and last pipe of the Paleolithic age.

What's Your Number?

Pythagoras, sometimes called "the philosopher of Crotona," considered numbers as the principle and essence of all things, and to them he attributed a real and distinct existence.

According to him, they were the elements out of which the universe was constructed, although he never definitely explained the process by which he came to his deductions.

The unit, he considered, was the source of all numbers; the number "two" was imperfect and the cause of much controversy. "Three" he termed the number of the whole because it had a beginning, a middle and an end. "Four," representing the square, was in the highest degree perfect. And "ten," the sum of these four prime numbers, comprehended all musical and mathematical proportions, denoting the system of the world.

The relation of the notes of the musical scale to numbers led Pythagoras to apply the word "harmony" to all visible creation. He contended that in the center of the universe there was a central fire, which was the principle of life. This central fire was supposed to be surrounded by the earth, the moon, the sun and the five planets and the distances between these heavenly bodies were conceived to correspond to the proportions of the musical scale.

The Empty Sleeve

By EVERETT SHINN

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

I

"WHAT ye goin' to do fer yer country?"

The voice of Sergeant Muggie rasped through the irritated tubes of a swollen throat, the result of an all-day, uninterrupted call for recruits for overseas service.

Sergeant Muggie was a very fine set-up young man. A carved wooden soldier — a uniform, belted and buckled over a frame of wood; service straps and honor mentions pinned and sewn on a chest that neither expanded nor contracted—withal, a forbidding looking toy.

A plaything in the hands of Mars, that had seen hard usage, showed in the limp, flat sleeve folded square with the cuff pinned to his shoulder.

Who could better blazon the glory of the army than Sergeant Muggie? Who took up more space as a sign of service? Who could better challenge the idle crowd gaping at him? Who, after all, could yell louder?

There, in Bryant Park, stood Sergeant Muggie, under the shadow of the elevated railroad, like a bulwark of power and courage loudly expatiating on the glories of the army.

His hand rested on the top of a tent-like board flap on which, through the phrase "Your Country Needs You," Uncle Sam pointed an arresting finger.

A marine stood near the Sergeant, trading on the crowd's interest and preference for the sea.

His side of the sandwiched poster board held a composite of our coast defense beating into a mountain of foam. Across a wash of blue, a dreadnought keeled over in the recoil from her broadsides.

Like circus barkers, both recruiting officers referred to the inadequacy of mere paint to come within four thousand miles of the wonders "under the big tent."

Only a life! A mere fraction of time, and you see the greatest show on earth! All reserved seats. Na-

tions turning somersaults and whole armies doing the dip of death! Only a life. A mere fraction of time! No lives refunded.

"What ye goin' to do fer yer country?"

For the thousandth time Sergeant Muggie had asked this question, and for the thousandth time the empty sleeve fluttered with the muscular agitation in his broad shoulders.

The arm that had not come unpinned from that wooden frame extended a horny hand and clutched the air, crushed its invisible foes and garroted the villainy of Germany.

Sergeant Muggie puffed, blew, exhorted, and insulted the sweltering pack of human beings that half-circled the burning sidewalk.

SERGEANT MUGGIE was a good showman. He knew many tricks that drew attention.

In the morning he had drawn enough men to half fill the square. They came like bits of steel, like needles jumping at a magnet.

But this evening they were slow in response to his call. Perhaps his throat was sore. Perhaps he was bodily weary. Perhaps he was irritated by the open, empty space about him. He tried his tricks, pleaded them, yelled them.

His red, thick neck bulged like boiled meat over his tight collar. Sweat poured over his face.

With a wave of disgust, he leaned against the wooden frame that held the posters, but suddenly there came between the puffy lids of his eyes an inspired twinkle. He had thought of another stunt.

Quickly he jumped back of the wooden frame holding the lithograph of Uncle Sam with his index finger leveled like a gun barrel at all his sons.

Sergeant Muggie turned it rapidly from side to side, sweeping the crowd, the finger, like a machine gun, raining an awakening in Uncle Sam's slumbering defenders.

"Ye hain't goin' to let yer old Uncle Sam point at ye like that, are ye?"

His voice was hoarse, yet loud. But there was another, louder than his own, pressing out of the crowd.

"I'm a-comin', Uncle," it said. And a red-faced young Jew walked boldly out.

At the sound of the Sergeant's voice, with the hot wave of air across his face made by the fierce pounding appeal of the Sergeant's arm, there arose in this East Side Jew a willingness and fanatical fervor to be an atom thrown against the grinding wheels of Germany's war machine.

Millions of little flecks of human dust, like this boy, might clog the wheels. The machine might grind less perfectly. Millions more and the wheels might slacken, and with more millions the wheels might stop.

And then—what?

Sergeant Muggie smiled. He swept the board from side to side. But no more men came forward. That trick had brought only one recruit.

Muggie's ambition was gone.

"I say," he said, and stopped short. His throat hurt and his voice wouldn't carry to the crowd. He moved slowly toward the wide circle, his heavy weight leaving broad heel marks in the hot asphalt.

"Say, you boys, don't this mean nothin' to ye?" And he laid a broad, sunburned fist on the young Jew's shoulder.

"It only means he's goin' to shoot somebody or get shot before he does."

The voice was low and even. Sergeant Muggie wheeled against the crowd like an angry bull against a fence.

"Who said that?" he demanded.

"Me." And a young man, his eyes steady under the shade of a chauffeur's cap, looked up at the angry sergeant.

"Who are you—where do ye get that stuff?"

Wiping his hand from the young Jew's shoulder, as if it had been pushed, Sergeant Muggie broadened his chest and looked down on the young man who had stuck a pin in the glistening bubble of patriotism he had spent his failing breath in expanding.

"Shootin' off yer face don't get ye nothin,' kid. Shootin' off guns is what Uncle Sam wants. Get me?"

Sergeant Muggie's empty sleeve fanned the young man's face, as he wheeled about and gripped the hand of another young man who had pushed out from the crowd.

"Comin' in the game?" he asked of the confused youth.

"Yes, sir."

A glance from the Sergeant in the direction of the young chauffeur implied everything contemptuous. He writhed under this stinging sneer. The Sergeant's voice was raised in glorious approval.

"Say, friends, here's a guy that's a regular he-man. Here's a guy that's goin' to shoot bullets at *Germans*, not his mouth at *Americans*."

Suddenly the chauffeur found himself out of the line of the crowd and facing the Sergeant.

"That's a swell way to get *men* to fight for their country. Insult them. That's a——"

He found himself checked by an open hand, like a board fence, near his mouth.

"Men?" The broad-chested Sergeant grew broader and again the empty sleeve wiped across the chauffeur's face.

"Men?" The Sergeant accented the pointed questioning of the word.

"Men?" he repeated. "Men to fight for their country? Nobody has to insult *men* to get 'em mad. They go before ye have to call 'em names.

"Say, kid, a taxi driver's job here in little old New York, ringin' up fares on yer boss and over-chargin' disabled service men, is about your size."

THE young man's senses blurred for just a second, and he found his fist close to Sergeant Muggie's face, but it landed in the big, wet, sticky hand of the Sergeant.

He tore his hand away and backed into the crowd. Some of the faces he met were wide open with laughter. Some just focused on his twisting face.

"Charley!"

The young chauffeur's voice was high.

"Drive my jitney back to the garage. Tell the boss I'm through."

"Sure, Pete, I'll do it for you . . . but, what the——"

"Say, you fresh guy, I'm back again, I'm here, and I'll show you that you are a dirty liar—I hate war, but I'll go."

The Sergeant smiled. "Sure ye hate war, kid; Sullivan had a right to hate Corbett."

"That ain't it—I'm not afraid—I tell you I'm not afraid—it's killin' —I don't believe it in—I hate it—but I'm goin'."

The Sergeant guffawed. "Look, boys. Here's a regular citizen. He's goin' into the big scrap—and why? Because he's more afraid of stayin' home than he is of the Germans."

"Is he?"

This time Pete's fist found a stopping point on the closely shaven chin of Sergeant Muggie.

The Sergeant was a heavy man. It was like hitting one of the elevated pillars. He didn't move. Pete was jostled back into the crowd by the

Sergeant and another recruiting officer.

"I tell you I want to join the army, and I'm goin' to join the army if I have to raise one myself and take it over."

Sergeant Muggie smiled and wiped the moisture from the band in his cap. He threw back his big red face. He beckoned to Pete. He was smiling.

To the young chauffeur, Sergeant Muggie's broad mouth cut across his brain like a knife edge. It maddened him.

"Come on, kid, I guess they can use you—for—for wadding."

Pete clenched his fists. His nails felt as if his hands were closing over broken glass. He spread out his hands close to his eyes. Deep half-moon indentations lined across his palms.

He felt a little bit ashamed that he had wasted breath on the big, blustering Sergeant. He tightened his belt, and slowly scuffing his feet along the hot asphalt, he moved to the line of recruits behind the war department's advertising.

He idly leaned over the wooden sandwich boards on which the posters crumpled in the dried-out paste, and absent-mindedly tapped the center of a bursting blaze of lithography, dirigibles, planes, rockets, a shower of fire let loose in colored ink.

Sergeant Muggie exhorted the pack of bodies jammed together under the hot sun. "What ye goin' to do fer yer country? What ye——"

He had caught sight of Peter leaning over the posters.

"Say, kid, take yer hands off'en that; ye'll get burned."

Peter had not understood the goading humor lurking in the melodramatic, fear-struck face of Sergeant Muggie, and quickly pulled back his hands as if they were close to some blistering danger.

The crowd laughed immoderately; outright and against him. He flushed and wore a sickly smile. Then came a lightning transition, hard and cruel. His eyes flashed along his extended arm toward the imposing bulk of Sergeant Muggie.

"How did you lose that arm—reaching for something that wasn't yours?"

There was a murmur of derision in the crowd. There was a loud laugh somewhere on the outside of the circle.

"Cut it, kid," someone yelled.

Sergeant Muggie's head snapped back as if something stronger than Pete's fist had found it. Suddenly he roared.

It wasn't anger. It was bellowing laughter. He laughed — he walked slowly, rocking in his merriment. He neared Pete, and here, as he looked at him, he stifled a burst of glee that resulted in a gust of breath.

"Kid, say, kid, yer there. I got to hand it to ye—but I only got one to shake with. If they plant you where my arm is, you will be scattered all over France."

A HAND was laid on the young chauffeur's shoulder.

"Say, friend, that won't do any good, yellin' at him or him yellin' at you. Both of you have used up enough energy to kill a hundred Germans already."

Peter faced a young man of his own age. The boy who had gone up before him. A good-looking, smiling face with clean, smooth skin with patches of down that some day might turn to coarse stubble.

"We're in it now. We're going over and what's the use of talking about it. The war department's got yer friend out there for that—to do the talking.

"I don't like him myself. But he's

got a good record. Look at his medals. He's striped all over like a Tiffany clothes-line."

Pete felt an assuaging conviction in his companion's words. He was right. What was the use in talking? He himself hadn't any medals; only a chauffeur's license. He was in it now, or would be.

And then he found himself spelling out his full name to a recruiting officer.

"Peter Martin."

"Age?"

"Twenty-two."

"Stand over there."

And Peter lined up with the youth who had spoken to him. Next to him stood the young Jew.

He nudged Peter. He wanted to talk about the way Peter had been used by the recruiting Sergeant.

Peter had said he was through talking, and he definitely was, as far as conversation dealt with himself and Sergeant Muggie.

"Where ye from?" Peter asked the youth who had pointed out the futility of a quarrel other than one with Germany.

"Indiana."

"That so—I'm from this burg—hotter 'n hades—isn't it? Want a cigarette?"

Peter was nervous. He didn't want one. He glanced at his shoes; turned keys and a few pennies over in his pocket, whistled a faraway, meaningless air.

He was becoming conscious of a tingling, unpleasant feeling creeping up his back. His blood had been heated to defiance and sacrifice; now, in its cooling, there stalked something unpleasant. It was fear—and he knew it.

Now that his anger had gone, he found himself about to promise that he would kill people, just because the United States said they wanted him to. He found himself lined up and ready to be delivered as a target for German bullets.

His temper had trapped him. He suddenly found himself asking the Indiana boy, with a convincing sneer, such questions as: "I suppose that some people try to get out of it—I mean—mean the drafted boys—when they get caught?"

"Pretty hard to get by the hard-boiled eggs on the draft board," said the boy from Indiana.

Peter found himself hoping that, out of sight of the crowd and the hateful presence of Sergeant Muggie, he would be found faulty by the Medical Examiner.

He hoped he had broken arches. He remembered a pain he had in his foot in the early part of the summer, when he had walked the streets for a job. The taxi he drove took it away, but if he bent his foot a lot it might come back.

He looked across Bryant Park and caught the cement lines between the stones in the Public Library on the facade facing Sixth Avenue. No use—his eyesight was perfect.

Lungs? No.

What was the matter with him? Nothing, and he knew it. Knew that a perfect body was about to make a promise to make it imperfect.

And for what? Because he got mad at Sergeant Muggie. Because Sergeant Muggie insulted him. He was offended because the taunt was thrown in his face publicly.

If Sergeant Muggie had told him he was a coward in an alley, he might have allowed it to pass. But because people—ha! There they were—cowards themselves—they weren't screaming for a place in the army.

Because they laughed at him, he wanted to show them that he wasn't a coward, by simply stepping into the line of the boys that had enlisted.

"What a fool I am," he thought. "Now that I have shown I am willing to go, I've proved that I am no coward. But it doesn't stop here, in Bryant Park. I'm slated for the other side.

"I've got to shoot at other men and they've got to shoot at me. Oh, well, I'm in it. That's all, I'm in it," and Peter swallowed hard, and thought of the hot leather seat, back of the driver's wheel in his taxicab, to be filled by a stranger.

II

A HELL more infernal than the brimstone and fire of Biblical teaching lay in front of him. It writhed, flashed, struck, heaved, screamed. It was there, wide open; a bubbling cauldron—sizzling human grain in the porridge for Mars. There, in the carrot field, men were preparing themselves for his dish.

In the seering blast of war, the Hades of Lucifer appeared to be only a soothing threat to check the erring; a painted thing of retribution; a myth.

But here, at first hand, hell was manifest, surpassing all prophecy.

Here crouched poor Peter, an undigested atom in a side channel of the gluttonous belly of War.

Every sense he possessed was jammed with a horrible recognition of facts.

The smell of chemical explosion. Gas lurking in transparent blankets over shell holes. Waves of gas-soaked fields, trailing gray death lines through wet apple blossoms. Blossoms that dripped fragrant incense into the rotting vapors in the trampled grass.

Then came a hurried order for masks, and Peter got a whiff for the first time of mustard gas, recalling stale beer gardens in New York.

There was the touch of the cold face of the Indiana boy when Peter had traded helmets without asking; the swaying figure of the young Jew; the now crumpled uselessness of Nathan Myrowitz, as his split cheek wiped past Peter's dry, hot hand; the pound of heavy guns, screaming shells, crashing timber; tiny, troublesome calls out of place; frightened sheep and cackling hens; the throttled down coo of a mother dove on the remains of her nest. Even the flutter of her wings Peter caught as she snuggled down over her eggs.

PETER'S eyes were working like animated camera lenses, were filing away horrors.

Fifty feet in front of him, men were tumbling in and out of trenches like armored maggots. Glistening yellow flashes, short, like strips of lightning, cut the gray, billowing sky like gold threads spun by a crazy spider.

Wasp-like dots high in the drifting smoke were dropping, turning, darting, as the "eyes of the army" plotted with deadly accuracy the next sharp gouge of the big guns.

A keen sting in Peter's cheek and then warm blood—his blood—his own blood trailing into his mouth. The taste, in its salty heat, drove into his body a quickening warmth.

With the taste of his own blood, the stream in his veins coursed like lava. It was past the bubbling point, and the compelling desire to give it vent, to spatter and explode, was held in check by the uplifted, trembling hand of his Captain.

In a few seconds that hand would drop and then he would go over with the rest of them or go alone. There was a driving force within that he had never felt. It frightened him and it elated every sense he possessed.

Sergeant Muggie was right after

all, even if his method in getting recruits was offensive. His appeal came as from one who had helped to purge the world of its sores. His empty sleeve bore witness to what it had cost him.

Peter felt his own arms; two thin, hard arms, waiting to be snipped off or be carried back into times of peace where forgotten heroes forget themselves.

Suddenly a blaze of hate for Sergeant Muggie wiped his brain.

He would give one arm—a leg—anything to be able to show Sergeant Muggie that he had gone through with a full-sized man's job.

And he would flaunt whatever was left of him in the face of the recruiting Sergeant who had taunted him and called him a coward.

"Over . . . boys . . . give 'em hell!"

Sweating bodies, leashed to the Captain's whistle, gripped at the trench wall, and, like a string of dirty clay marbles, the whole line whipped over the bullet-ploughed rim into a black wave of choking smoke.

They beat into it, cursing, groaning and pawing at it, as if it were something their fingers could clutch and crush. Bottled-up fear burst into harrowing blasphemy. Nerve-grinding tension split into individual grotesque maneuvers. Men staggered, jumped and halted and dodged, wept and coughed and screamed and laughed—and the laughter was the worst of all.

Gas masks were torn frantically into place and again the men moved forward gropingly, lurching, slipping, weaving this way and that. Those who couldn't die pressed on into spurts of fire and slices of driven steel.

On, on, on.

Staggering, whirling, crawling brown bugs hugging the earth; animate and inanimate dust driven forward in the path of the crushing wheels of a War Lord's Juggernaut.

On, on, on.

The world seemed to rock and planets seemed to shrivel and pour down boring lava as sand-whipped men, shell-shocked men, blinded men, bloody men, scared and grave men leaned, step by step, into the circling sweep of the reaper's scythe.

OUT in the choking rot of black vapor Peter Martin found himself bumping between two panting giants.

Sharp spits of fire cut out from their guns against the lurking horrors that lay way ahead.

Over mounds of soft clay, down into deep water pockets, up and down sliding trails they moved, alert, scared, fierce, laughing.

One of the men at Peter's side pushed up his gas mask and drew his head close to Peter's.

"Was ye ever to Coney Island, Buddy?" he whispered.

Peter nodded his head. The strange halting gesture meant "Yes."

"Hain't this just like the roller coasters?" The big fellow sneezed and pulled down his mask.

A wave of cold air cut at the back of Peter's hand. The big body close at his side slumped. Peter crouched and scratched at the torn earth.

The man who had been on a Coney Island roller coaster had tasted a new thrill.

On and on, coaxed by death, went Peter and the other man on his left side. Then a racketing spring and a windless, hollow shriek that tumbled men like chaff under the burst of a blue white flare. And Peter walked alone.

On and still on in terrorizing loneliness.

It worried Peter that his finger

would not stop its palsied throbbing at the trigger of his gun. His ammunition gone, he unlocked and locked and pulled the hammer on a hollow chamber, putting out a mental opposition with every click.

Suddenly a frenzied horror possessed him. Where was he going? How did he get where he was? He wasn't actually questioning. It was just a body wonderment. A wish of its own to avert danger. Acuteness had deserted him when he had found himself alone.

Yet this sense-robbed moving thing out there felt that something or somebody should answer for his agony. Something did answer. It wafted, ghost-like, across the smeary glass in his gas mask; a blustering body, topped by a beefy neck and a wide, thin mouth stretched in derision.

"Muggie! *You've* done this to me!"

In answer to his frenzied outburst a strange little cooing sound came to him as his hand wiped against wet leaves.

In the pounding, the hissing and the rending of everything, the plaintive voice drew closer, soothing, sweet and cooling. Peter found his hand scraping at the shaggy crust of a tree.

He listened. Strange that the thunder of opposing armies died against the gentleness and sweet fragility of the voice of a frightened dove. Peter knew that he had wandered back toward his own lines and into a selected gutter of scientific slaughter.

He dropped his gun and worked himself into the branches of the tree. Scalding tears bubbled against the lining of his gas mask, shutting out what little light there was. With a welling nausea, he reached out and crumpled like a rag over a swaying limb.

A sound, soft and cool, like a fading zephyr. A tiny rustle in moving twigs close to his ear, then again the shivering little coo, that ended in his ears like the burst of a giant shell. He found himself wildly, desperately alive and scrambling madly out on the limb.

Why did his vision clear? Why did the pounding throb in his brain vanish? Where was he? What was it all about? Why was his face bound by this stifling bag with big glass saucers at his eyes?

He tore off his gas mask and reached out toward a little snuggling gray ball, deep in a crotch of the limb. His hand closed over it. It was soft and warm and again tears streamed down Peter's face. Suddenly he coughed as if he would empty out his whole body. He remembered his neglected gas mask, menacing the dove's life as well as his own.

So he hurriedly adjusted the mask, but before he tightened it against the cutting flames, he tucked the dove close up against his cheek.

Then, and in a blinding instant of time, there came a whirling, white hot splash of light, a rending crash and Peter forgot the war, Sergeant Muggie and even the dove.

HE was picked up, like a torn rag, in the splinters of a willow tree.

Men fought on. Days swelled the already appalling enormity of horrors until word flashed across the front that the next shot would be—murder.

Peter opened his eyes, on Armistice day, against the shadowed face of a nurse. She leaned over him and opened her hand. There, snuggling in her cupped fingers, was the dove.

"It's alive," she whispered.

"Am I?" Peter breathed, and fainted.

For days Peter Martin tread a frail passage over the endless pit of eternity. There were times when uniformed men gathered at his bedside and talked earnestly, and stroked the smooth silken back of the dove in the nurse's hands.

He never knew of these meetings over his torn body; not even when he was given his crutches and a hospital orderly was told off to pilot him home.

On the day that Peter Martin hobbled aboard the transport, the orderly told him, haltingly, that the hospital cat had killed the dove.

Peter sunk his head and moaned.

"Oh God, I went to France for this."

III

WHEN peace came and nations relaxed. In the putting to order of things, all evidence of the colossal crime was being effaced.

Sand was poured on the blood spots.

The plough turned back blood-soaked earth in the carrot fields. Grain waved in the sun. The groans of the dying were forgotten in the sweet breezes that purred through willow trees.

There were groups of men swarming the sides of transports. Some of them just pieces of men sent back to take up the thread of industry which had suddenly been snapped off when the need to protect it had arisen.

Some blind, some maimed, some without reason, some sickened, some hating.

Back of the line of crutches and arms waving farewells to France, in a steamer chair, swathed in blankets, sat Peter Martin, stroking with the stub of his arm that which in his dreaming seemed to be the cooing dove that the hospital cat had killed.

For hours Peter stared ahead, scarce a trace of life showing on his thin gray face. His eyes, drawn to a thin slit, looked bitterly out.

Then came a smile, really a thin sneer that held contempt. There seemed to be a satisfaction in his steady gaze.

But the source was invisible to all save Peter Martin. For it was fixed on a flapping, empty sleeve on a certain recruiting Sergeant in Bryant Park at the outset of the war.

At Peter's side sat the hospital orderly—a young man, his overseas cap worn well back from his shining pomaded hair.

Peter moved uneasily with his arm, under the blanket. The young man at his side, quick to discern the slightest wish of his charge, jumped to his feet.

"Just a minute, buddy."

The young man leaned over the chair and took a cigarette case from the folds of the blanket.

He opened it and, taking out a cigarette, placed it in Peter's mouth. He struck a match and Peter closed his eyes and puffed. Ashes formed and Peter blew them off.

He puffed and blew off the ashes until the cigarette was a glowing point at his thin lips. Leaning over, he spit out the wet end of the cigarette. The orderly put his foot on it as it struck the deck.

Peter Martin slowly closed his eyes, then suddenly opened them like narrow, slicing blades. He moved restlessly in his chair. His arm came from under the blanket and a stub, like a blunt stick, poked the blanket free from his opposite shoulder, showing a thin, empty sleeve, folded neatly, and pinned by the cuff to his shoulder.

He kicked irritably in the blankets about his knees. Dislodging them, he leaned over his chair and hooked a crutch, steadied himself and la-

bored upward. There he stood, balanced for a moment on the crutch and one highly polished boot, and from under his jacket there flapped an empty trouser leg.

He made an effort to move, then halted and looked at his foot. He ground his teeth in rage.

He wasn't used to it, being scattered all over France with Sergeant Muggie's right arm. He needed that leg to walk up to Sergeant Muggie and show him his own empty sleeve.

Two years of war had gone like a million years, scattered, uncertain, mystifying, for he was returning another being—a being from the dregs of another world. Yet in his memory, like one reincarnated, was the link that bound him to this world, to its sunshine and peacefulness.

Impatiently he hobbled along the deck as if he would beat the ship to its dock in the East River.

CHARLEY, who was Peter Martin's companion on the day of his enlistment, met him at the dock. He groaned at the sight of so little of his old friend. Peter and Charley gripped arms like two tender swords crossing.

"You haven't changed a bit, Charley," Peter said.

"You haven't changed—I mean—eh—eh——" Charley stammered and sputtered his confusion.

Peter smiled, but his eyes didn't. "Oh, I'm only changed inside-out."

Charley evaded his old friend's look and substituted further embarrassment in an eager search over the heads of the crowded dock.

"Got a taxi outside—mine, Peter. Where do you want to go?"

Peter Martin settled down on his crutch and closed his eyes.

"I'd like to take a ride up to Bryant Park, Sixth Avenue side. I want to see the place just once and then get *drunk*."

"Anything you ask for is going to be yours," responded the generous Charley.

Peter sagged a little further on his crutch. Slowly he pushed out his good arm, blunt at the end, in jagged stitches at his wrist.

His eyes slowly fell to the floor of the dock-house. He moved one polished boot, and when he raised his eyes again to his friend, they were wide open, fierce and flaming in color. His mouth twitched and his nostrils opened and shut.

"Anything?" he whispered, slowly nodding his head.

Charley knew there was no answer. Knew that his fine intention was again misconstrued. Not intentionally, but he knew that he had hurt his friend.

Charley helped him through the elbows that clasped tight about uniformed shoulders. Through wavering walls of grief—through clinking crutches—sobs of joy—hysterical babblings—out to the taxi.

In a cluttering, good-humored congestion of moving vehicles the car halted. Peter slipped his crutch through the open front window and poked his friend.

"Drunk, you understand, Charley. Drunk!"

Charley laughed back his assurance that he would get as drunk as Peter and asked: "Glad to be home?"

"So glad I can't wait."

They drove on in silence under elevated tracks and through streets parked with clinging friends. At last Charley spoke:

"I saw that guy, that Sergeant who kidded you that day. He had a bunch of girls hanging on his neck. They all wanted him, but he was too drunk to want any of them."

"Where did you see him?" The

voice from the taxi was soft and mixed with a yawn.

"Oh, in a dump down in Greenwich Village, Fourth Street, Maggie's Mush House. Eatin' joint and pretty tough."

Silence again as they gyrated through lines of elevated railroad pillars, passed Herald Square and settled into the car tracks in a swift, purring gait up Sixth Avenue.

Bryant Park at last opened up before them and the taxi came to a halt.

"That's that," came a voice at Charley's elbow. "I've seen it all —and now——" Peter fumbled at the handle on the door. "Let's get drunk."

"Gee, that was a quick visit, Pete." Charley laughed and pulled at a freshly lit cigarette.

"That wasn't a visit, Charley, that was a party call. Just payin' my respects for an invitation I got two years ago.

"Light a cigarette for me, will you, Charley, and beat it to some place where we can sit down to something that scalds our throats."

Peter leaned back and pulled at his cigarette. The taxi moved out into the uptown traffic, then turned west on Forty-seventh street for a short run, and drew up in the middle of a line of dilapidated houses between soaring office buildings.

Peter was outside again before Charley could pull up his emergency brakes.

Then, through an iron gate, arm in stub, they passed across five feet of sun-baked earth.

INSIDE, where Charley was known, drinks were brought in rapid-fire order in heavy coffee cups, until the proprietor saw signs of boisterousness in Charley and a glint of danger in Peter Martin's eyes.

An opportunity to be rid of a promising disturbance offered itself to the proprietor as a well-dressed man past dependence on his legs, swayed in a calico-draped doorway at the back of the room.

"Say, driver, can you take this gentleman to his hotel?" the proprietor asked Charley as he held the limp body of the man in the manner of propping up a boiled piece of tender asparagus.

"No, too busy," growled Charley, sliding his hand across the table to Peter Martin's coffee cup.

"Hold your mouth open, Pete . . . not yer chin. . . . Attaboy. . . . Go on . . . inhale it if you want to. . . . What's the difference, so's ye get it." Charley's circling hand feebly held the coffee cup and Peter Martin's searching lips bobbed in the eddies of indecision until he found the thick, chipped curve of the cup and gulped at its vitriolic contents.

He gasped, coughed and sagged back against the tattered and grease-wiped wallpaper.

"That's enough, Charley, for a while. I want to think . . . want—uh—think—think—think."

Peter Martin's senses were closing down.

"Want to think? . . . How long will ye be . . . er . . . thinkin'?" Charley asked with his mouth close into a dirty sugar bowl.

Charley's wavering glance rested on the swaying figure of the well-dressed man who sought his hotel bed. He thought of the fare that could be used in celebrating the home coming of Peter Martin.

"Be back in a minute, Pete." Charley pushed through tables and chairs and brought up in a rather creditable, upright position in front of the proprietor and his sagging charge.

"Get that guy . . . out in my taxi . . . write his address and pay me before I start."

The proprietor scribbled an address across the faded purple ink on a crumpled menu card, folded it about a crisp five-dollar bill and pushed it into Charley's vest pocket.

Then, puffing with the effort of getting his paying patron to the taxi, the proprietor stood looking down at the apparently senseless form of Peter Martin.

Slowly Peter's eyes opened, red and dull like two cleansed wounds.

"Get me a taxi."

The proprietor, eager to be rid of a non-paying fixture, soon returned with a shifty-eyed chauffeur whose gentleness in handling Peter suggested a gouging fare rather than compassion.

"Where ye want to go, General?" the driver asked through the open taxi door.

"What?"

"Where am I takin' ye to?" the driver asked again.

"Oh . . . the place . . . going to . . . oh, yes . . . somebody's mush. . . . Maggie's Mush House." Peter seemed satisfied that he had given explicit directions and settled back in his seat.

"I know it, Admiral," replied the glib chauffeur.

"That's fine." Peter Martin's eyes closed as his mouth opened in a fierce roar. "Fine!"

IV

TWENTY minutes of delirious thinking and painful bobbing about in the taxi, and Peter stood insecurely above a narrow flight of steps that led down to Maggie's Mush House on South Washington Square.

He hobbled, bumped and slid to the open door and blinked in the ill-smelling darkness. A sallow-faced waiter was taking a record from a scratched and liquid-stained machine near the door as Peter Martin floundered up to him.

"What's in there?" Peter Martin asked, indicating the doorway with the stub of his arm under his cloak.

"That's what I've often wondered." The waiter's eyes had a far-away look. He seemed to be talking to himself. Suddenly he caught his wayward spirit and snapped into attentiveness before Peter.

"That, sir, is called 'the big top.' Maggie, the woman that owns this place, was in a circus once. Couple of hoops she used to jump through hang on the wall . . . sawdust and everything. It's—it's . . ."

The waiter was still talking, but Peter Martin had passed through the door. His head, a bit above his crutches, almost wiped the grime on the low ceiling. He clattered on, his crutch clipping over the uneven floor.

His eyes blinked in the thick smoke and the acrid smell of greasy cooking nauseated him. Short, narrow tables tilted in unsteady lines about the wall.

Peter remembered dugouts and shelter-pits more spacious and less dirty. From the gloom of the corner a match blazed and lit up two faces, and in a swish of air that must have exhaled a volume of tobacco smoke, came a guttural curse, followed by:

"Get off'en my lap, or I'll slam ye one on the jaw."

It was the voice of the Sergeant who had slapped a young boy's face in Bryant Park over two years ago.

Peter Martin shrank back. The voice was like needles in his flesh. It withered him, yet it was something he had prayed to hear once more.

The voice came again, cruel and selfish: "I tell ye, get off'en my lap. Ye got to pay wim'min money. I can buy somethin' better than the

whole lot of ye—booze, that's better."

"Say . . . it's my money yer usin' . . . ye big stiff . . . ye short sport, piker, quitter, coward. . . . Huh! How did ye get yer arm that way? Got it caught on a bar, I guess, and they had to cut yer arm off to throw ye out.

"Ye dirty coward! Tellin' me what ye done to the Kaiser! Why, a photograft of him would give ye a fatal chill. You—you——" There followed no words, but an adequate equivalent. The spluttering voice alone, that found no worthy invective in speech, was cut short with a quick slapping sound.

A scream, and a tousled woman holding her face slunk past Peter Martin. The outer door slammed and Maggie's Mush House was quiet again.

PETER lurched forward into a chair at one of the dirty-topped tables and kicked violently at one of the wobbly legs with his polished boot. The flat-chested, chalk-skinned waiter appeared in the doorway.

"Did you call, sir?" he asked.

"No, I kicked," said Peter.

"That's all some guys can do," came from the shadowy corner across the room. Peter looked up and threw back his reply.

"And that's all this one can do from now on." He turned to the waiter. "Whisky," he said.

"Water with it, sir, or ginger ale?" asked the waiter.

"No . . . all by itself . . . a full bottle. And would you mind . . . " But the waiter had gone. Peter fumed.

"Say, kiddo!" Again the voice from the shadowy corner. "One thing at a time is about all a waiter can carry. Remember, he's got a couple of feet to drag around."

At the mention of feet, Peter Martin screwed himself up into a painful knot.

"I want a cigarette," he snapped at the darkness.

"I got one," the drunken one in the shadows moved his chair, then noisily set a course through entangling obstacles to Peter Martin's table.

He sank heavily opposite Peter, and threw a wet cigarette box across the table.

"Help yourself."

"I got cigarettes," Peter growled.

"I thought ye said ye wanted one?"

"My own—here in my pocket—take one out and put it in my mouth," said Peter evenly.

The man in sergeant's uniform leaned back and laughed.

"Particular guy, you are, that ye can't wait on yerself."

"Yes," said Peter very quietly as the waiter placed a small glass and a full black bottle on the table.

"Six dollars," said the waiter, putting forth a white, nervous hand.

"Reach in that pocket and take out a bill," Peter told him quietly.

The waiter stiffened. The drunken sergeant blinked and leaned forward. Peter held out his arm. It stopped at the wrist.

"Oh . . . sorry . . . very sorry, sir."

And the waiter extracted a bill from Peter's pocket.

"Very sorry, sir. I'll get you the change."

"Never mind, waiter—it's yours."

The sergeant leaned back in his creaky chair and roared with laughter.

"Bonehead, I am. Didn't notice the uniform. Just got back, I take it?"

"Yes," said Peter. "Pour me a drink and one for yourself."

In twenty minutes of pick-up conversation and heavy drinking, Peter

had fulfilled his promise to Charley.

The bottle now marked at low ebb and the sergeant, sodden and crumpled, blinked like a deep-sea fish unused to the light, and puffed at a jagged cigar, wet like a mop in his twitching lips.

"So yer on the scrap-heap, hey? Gee, hain't that tough!" The big shoulders of the sergeant moved sideways and two red, filmy eyes appraised the remnant of a man at the other side of the table.

"Tough, or I'm a liar. Leg, arm, both hands." If alcohol had not loosened the tough tendons in the sergeant's neck, the drooping gesture might have gone for sympathy.

"Sure . . . and now the world makes my business illegal. I can't kill any more. Scrap-heap is right."

"Not for mine." The sergeant's gesture was swift and positive.

"What do you mean, not for you? That sleeve. . . . I thought you had been overseas."

Peter's query was soft, for his throat closed in on the question. He had a chilling fear that his two years of torturing thought must be verified now.

"Me? Me? . . . Why, I hain't never seen the bay? Crossin' that much water would poison me."

The sergeant shuddered and reached for the black bottle.

"How did you lose that arm, then?"

This Peter almost whispered. He felt that the space between himself and the other man was getting less. That there was no need to raise his voice. Things were getting closer.

"How? Easy. Too easy."

A terrible frown had come over the dull red eyes of the sergeant.

"I mauled a couple of tiger cubs through the bars of a cage and Mamma Bengal spanked me. Just reached out and took my arm. But I poisoned her good when I got out of the hospital."

"Circus?"

That was about all the breath Peter Martin had for words.

"Sure! I barked for Wingling's Circus for years." And the sergeant's drunken voice was raised in a bellowing "spiel."

"A dime . . . ten cents . . . a tenth part of a dollar and you see the greatest show on earth. . . . The dip of death. . . . The living skeleton. . . . Ferocious jungle and man-eatin' tigers——" Suddenly the sergeant pushed himself up in his chair. His mouth hung open and the little bloodshot eyes were afraid. His hand ironed the flat, empty sleeve at his side to his waist. His loose face gathered in a grotesque smile.

"Thought I was in front of the—the canvas city," he blubbered as he coughed and laughed and then sagged heavily over the table.

PETER MARTIN glared at the rumpled head and made desperate twitching efforts to clear his own head of the seething jumble of thoughts that were crowding in.

Then, suddenly, he clearly understood that he was Peter Martin, mangled and thrown on the scrap-heap and that the man across the table was the sergeant who had thrown him there.

Shells seemed to pop in Peter's brain at the clarity with which he saw and felt this actuality.

"Now I got the spiel." And with drunken indifference the sergeant debauched what should have been a prayer.

"What . . . what ye goin' to do for yer country?" The last sentence trailed slowly out, the last word scarcely audible.

Peter Martin looked like the mother tiger as he stiffened against his crutch.

It seemed that he stood between

a drunkard's tantalizing fancy and tiny whimpering tiger cubs, and somewhere high in the sky the soft coo of a dove came to quiet his jangling nerves.

He tried again to get its peaceful note, but it had gone and left only the whimpering cry of the little cubs. His mind shuttled in wild flights from the hideous disclosures of the man before him and back to the blistering day, two years ago, in Bryant Park.

Wasn't he the next cub that Sergeant Muggie had manhandled? Wasn't he held up and slapped at for crowds to watch his helplessness?

A surging fury swept over him as he glared at the sodden bulk across the wet table-top. If he had been a cub then, he was full grown now, and he felt that he must stand between other little Peter Martins and the taunting hellishness of Sergeant Muggie.

He closed his eyes and hunted in a dizzy fog and a swaying world for something to divert his desire to rip Sergeant Muggie to shreds.

For a moment his reason cleared and incidents took a more orderly march in passing. The smoke-stuffed room rolled back and sun beat down on hot asphalt walks. Boys stood in wide-eyed wonderment looking at a broad-chested soldier cutting the air in windmill sweeps with his big arm. From the opposite shoulder, a sleeve, empty, creased and folded, pinned to his shoulder. There was a voice. It was loud. It came close to his face. It hissed. And then the suffocating, perspiring body that held the lungs that fired out his words.

It came to Peter Martin now like a white-hot needle thrust into his brain. His words. His appeal for help. It was the voice of Sergeant Muggie defiling a cry from God. The words were like holy water in a polluted wine cask. Like pears in slime.

"What ye goin' to do fer your country?"

Peter Martin struck his aching forehead with his forearm, and looked up.

His meandering brain came to a halt at the sight of a heavy iron pot on a shaky shelf. It was full of dusty blooms of red paper roses. In the dirty cluster, a cheap American flag sprung its flexible standard and angled its stars and stripes under the low, smoke-stained ceiling.

His eyes dropped to the closed lids of the sodden and slumbering sergeant, and for some reason his eyes wandered back to the heavy iron pot which perched precariously, almost directly, over Sergeant Muggie's head.

Again his eyes fastened on the iron pot and he hoped impossible things of its inanimate bulk. He jumbled a little of the meager knowledge he had of proverbs and religion.

"If the mountain will not come to — what's his name? — then, whoever he was, must go to the mountain," he whispered.

He rose and stretched out his stubbed wrist toward the thing that would not come to him, as Sergeant Muggie opened his eyes.

"Ever been in the army?" Peter found himself asking as he lowered his arm and brushed at a white cigarette trail down his chest.

"Sure. Done service over to Governor's Island. That was before I barked for Wingling's Circus. Later, after I gets me mit bit off by Mamma Bengal, I puts on me old uniform and beats it down to Bryant Park and shoots me spiel, all on me own.

"I gets a crowd and takes 'em over to the enlistment station. Nobody asked me nothin' and I gets swell feed fer three days. Then de

sapheads asked me questions about dis arm, and I left 'em flat."

"But—but you got men to enlist—you helped?"

"Men?" Muggie's eyes opened in a wide questioning stare.

"Men? Huh! I played for the kids. They couldn't do no harm to nobody." Muggie laughed in enjoyment of his own joke.

"The little cubs, hey?" Peter Martin's answering smile had no trace of mirth.

"Sure—kids, just de kids."

"You figured that Mamma Bengal had to pay for something?"

"Well?" Muggie's upward heave meant the answer, the question, and the settlement of it all. "Well?" He blew between his flabby lips and settled again in his chair. The red, puffy lids over his glassy eyes slowly fell, as his head dropped forward on his chest.

Peter Martin stiffened and raised himself on his crutch and for a moment stood looking down at the flabby, wet mouth of the sleeping sergeant.

His eyes darted to the heavy iron pot. It needed only a slight touch. He hitched himself up to his full height and p u s h e d his crutch through the dusty, trailing cluster of faded paper roses and hooked the rubber tip under the arched iron handle.

There was a slight rustle of paper. A puff of dust. A dull thud and a ringing crash on the floor.

V

PETER MARTIN stood, swaying on the edge of oblivion. Footsteps in the outer room sounded like blows against his slumbering brain.

Something came like a rush of wind over a fog-smothered river and he could see his way again. Yes, he could see across the water now to the land he had served in dugouts, in shell-holes and ripping, splintering, naked open spaces.

The chalk-skinned waiter, hurrying through the narrow passage, bumped into Peter's back.

"My God, was it that iron pot?" the waiter gasped as his eyes drew away from the shadow of the table.

"Yes, the iron pot. Yes, that's it—the iron pot," Peter whispered.

"I told the boss a thousand times that would fall some day. Artistic guys down here, but they hain't practical. Still"—he hesitated and nodded his head to where a few paper roses lay in the mussed sawdust—"still, that guy had an accident comin' to him. Go in the front room. I've got to telephone for the police."

Peter jogged through the narrow doorway, as the waiter bent down behind a partition and lifted a telephone. Outside, in the murky night, arclights dotted the Square. He slid through the door, up the stone steps and into the cool air.

In the shadow of Washington Arch he paused and sucked in the cold wet rain. It trickled down his cheek along a sharp furrowed scar and ran into his open mouth. It was clean to Peter Martin and seemed clean to Peter Martin and seemed to drip from angels' eyes.

"What ye goin' to do for your country?" he called out through the splashing curtain.

"What ye goin' to do for your country?" he repeated over and over again.

At last an answer came to his questioning. It came in garbled, but satisfying understanding.

It came in a strange belief that God gives men strange tools with which to cut out the cankers in their hearts.

An iron pot, hallowed with a wreath of paper roses.

He felt that his missing hands and leg had been a useless contribution in an effort to humanize the world, but that his service to war-ridden mankind lay on the floor in the shadow of a whisky-stained table. A bloody head resting on an empty sleeve!

His mind and body sought in the contact of the cold raindrops a sort of stabilization. They wavered against his own consciousness of what he had been, what he was, and what he had done. His only relief was mentally to tramp again with aching bodies of men through a deluge of steel splinters. The memory of the hell he had lived through caught him up in the frenzy of living it over again.

He thought as he did that day in the trench when the fever to fight had clutched him.

The warm rain streamed his face. It coursed the broad gash that sharpnel had made. It touched his lips. His tongue wiped them. He gagged in the memory of his own salty blood.

With a wrenching jerk of his whole body he poured over his cracked and burning lips a torrent of vile fermentation against the stony base of the arch.

For a moment he gripped the cold, wet masonry with the stub of his wrist, and ground his teeth, fine, clean white teeth, flawless teeth, and strained his vision out into the raindrops that struck sparks of light on the surface of a big black pool.

HE visioned iron bars in a gaudy circus wagon and the vicious sweep of a striped paw, tearing at an arm. He saw little whimpering cubs terrified in a straw-packed corner.

He saw the arm again, scattered in a bloody rain of glory over the battlefields of France.

He saw Sergeant Muggie's chest, ablaze with valorous medals; saw a sleeve made empty by a mother tiger's vengeance and his nerves went raw as he thought of the despicable coward who had paraded an empty sleeve and had wiped the faces of a crowd of boys with it as bait for heroism.

Then came hideous, disjointed action as he released his weight from the base of the Arch and spun backward over the gutter's edge.

"Damn the world . . . damn the war . . . damn . . . Oh, God, give me peace!"

Peter Martin buried his face deep down in his open collar and shuddered; a shudder that ended in a senseless laugh as he turned to hobble back into the protection of the Arch; slipped and hobbled, slipped and hobbled on again.

"What ye goin' to do fer yer country?"

He slipped forward in angular, disjointed awkwardness further into the shadow of the big arch.

He looked like a puppet held on animating strings, suspended from the mysterious shadow of the marble proscenium; hesitant, topheavy, sliding. A dead weight on the directing strings.

"What ye goin' to do——"

He breathed deeper into his open collar, as a great shadow spread itself at his back.

A bus horn suddenly voiced a quick warning. Brakes ground with a sharp piercing screech.

There was a sudden dull wiping of the wheels and the big towering bus fanned against the swaying figure of Private Peter Martin.

It was like a hand cornering a fly.

In the glittering reflection of the headlights against the inner wall of the Arch, a crumpled and disjointed puppet had broken its strings.

Nothing Ever Happens to Angel!

by
EVADNE PRICE

The Ace of Clews

The fifth of a series of short stories, each complete in itself.

WELL, I tell you as I sat in the Savoy enjoying the eats and mopping the fizz what Mr. Antony had ordered the world never looked so rosey, beleive me or not as you like.

Comparrisons they say is odeous, but whoever was responserble for that great thought for the day was not so well as they was before Noar started in the ship-building busyness.

The comparrison between me at 9 o'clock that morn and lunch time was anything *but* odeous, to me anyway.

At 9 o'clock I got up feeling what was the cheapest and least messiest way to committ suiside, and not being able to decide what because no matter how you look at it suiside costs money, unless you throw yourself in the river and then a police boat comes nosing round and hawls you out with vile recrimernations and you half drownded and can't anser back flewent, and your locked up for same and you've ruined what clothes your wearing besides catching pewmonia and getting called down all round like it was somebody else's life you was destroying and not your own exclusive property.

And if you do succeed in drownding youreslf, the police boat haveing sprung a leak or them playing poker and can't leave a big jackpot, you swell up and look a shocking sight when laid out, and years older than your real age, which no girl what prides herself on her appearants wants to do, does she?

So I decided sorrowfull that suiside is a washout unless you got hte cash in hand to do it in style, such as verronel or racing cars at Brooklands.

The only other way you can exitt from this vale of tears without the authoritys poking their long noses in, is by lingering starving, which I look like doing easy, or by drinking

the landlady's cofee, a painfull method I dassent comment about, me oweing two week's rent and laying low in consequents.

That's the pitch things was at when there's a knock and enter a telegramm boy with a wire what reads: "Come at once lunch Savoy. Mr. Antony confessed, all forgive and forgott, Gaby."

"And I register histericle joy, for it's my old pal Gaby Antony come home from Nice, what I'd had a slight differents with, her thinking I was vamping her hubby and me with my lips sealed sheilding him from a low gold-digger name of Gertie.

The message meant he'd cleared my fair name and everything in the garden was lovely. The dark clouds has rolled by and not before there time.

It was a merry lunch party, Gaby fussing over me trying to make up for wrongdoing my innocents, and me haveing my first square meal for days and days.

There was two guests, a Mr. and Mrs. Forteskew Lemon, which Gaby had met abroad and what had returned to London with them and was also staying at the Savoy.

They was certainly a brace of good-lookers, him the strong, silent cave-man, sunbronzed like the advert says, and her little and apealing, and they both lay themselves out to be charming to yours truly, Mr. Lemon in partickular. He was the type what made you feel in the first handshake that you was Cleopatrer only better.

I wouldn't of been averse to a spot of intreege with Mr. Lemon (pronounced Lee-moan, Gawd knows why, a lemon's a lemon all the world over, I say) but I seen that so far as I was conserned said gent was blind and deaf, for he was making the running with friend Gaby, and she was being that girlish it was terrible, bridleing and simping and slapping him on the wrist at everything he said like a ingenoo in a blue sash.

I got nervous after they both drank out of the same glass and eat the same roll off the same plate, and wondered how Mr. Antony was taking it, but I needn't of worried. Mrs. Lemon was putting in some heavy work on him, and he was that far gone he was letting the waiter remove his Lobster Newbug before he'd began on it and would of lost it for keeps but for my presents of mind.

Mrs. Lemon was sure unleashing her sex attracktion on Hank Antony. She was exooding it from every paw, and he was lapping up the sweet stuff like a kitten what has knocked over the cream jug accidentall and beleives in farys at last.

Well, I thinks filosopical, tipping the waiter the wink to replenish my empty glass, I should worry. I hope Gaby's got enough gumshion to know what side her bread's cavvyared on, and not getting mixed up in any infernal tryangel dramer and losing her legal bank balants, that's all.

But I know *I* wouldn't of let a hubby as wealthy as Mr. Antony be hipnotized by the baby stare of Mrs. Lemon, pronounced Lee-moan. He was hanging on her words like a fly on a treacley wall, and she was shaking a luring eye at him guaranteed to kill any strong man at a hundred yards.

I noted down a few tricks she done with her eyelashes for my own future use, being always open to learn anything buckshee.

"HOW'S the famous collection of jewels going on, Mr. Antony?" I asks chatty, trying to break the Lorrelly's spell prow temm.

"Oh, I've give that idea up temp,"

he replys. "I think I told you, Dolly," he turned to Mrs. Lemon, "that Angel's the little heroin what saved the Allerton Ruby for me. A born detectif she is."

"Oh, what fun," gushes Mrs. Baby-face, giving me a look like hell for busting her tatertate. "Are you taking it up prefessional?"

"I wish to something I was," I states emphattic. "There's cash in the sluthe trade."

"For me I'd always employ a private in preferents to a real detectif," she lisps. "The police terrify poor little me," and she places her wee hand confiding in Mr. Antony's, and said gent nearly purrs.

I repress expleative with difficulty. It's a marvel to me what the trusting male will swallow from these blue-eyed little kitten girls.

I never met a dame five foot high with gold curls and a shy two-year-old stare what couldn't buy and sell a Big Busyness man without him notising there was a sale on and it always tears my heart out with its pathoss.

"The detectif trade certainly has got money in it," breaks in the male portion of the Lemon tribe at this junction, "I've known lots of——" he stops talking and starts viserble.

"What a coincidents!" he breathes, and we all ask what and he points to the table oppersite. "Talk of the devil, or rather detectifs, there's my old friend Mr. Hartley from the famous Pinkerton agentcy in New York, one of the smartest private sluthes in the world. Now what's he doing over here, I wonder?"

"Oh, *do* ask him over, dear," crys Mrs. Lemon, "I've heard you speak of him so often. Do you mind?" she begs Mr. Antony, clapping her hands babyish.

"Oh, do, Forteskew," urges Gaby. "I'll be thrilled to meet a *reel* tec," and Mr. Lemon walks across and greets Mr. Hartley what reggisters surprise and shakes Mr. Lemon hearty by the hand.

After a few minutes he pilotts him for our table, and the waiter brings another seat and the tec is sat next door to me.

I've never seen the real article before, but you'd of known he was a sluthe anywhere. He'd sharp black eyes and looked as if he had disguises in every pocket and he spoke curt like he was cross-examining you and finding you guilty on every count.

"What you doing this side the herring pond, Mr. Hartley," asks Mr. Lemon, "or mayn't we ask?"

A cunning smile flits over the detectif's face.

"Ask any crook of the London underworld," he grins sinister, "there all quaking in their shoes. My life's been attempted twice today already. I'm on the track of a gang of internashional jewell thiefs." He pawses effecktive and we shudder.

"Oh, I'm scared to death," squeaks little Mrs. Lemon, "I hope my jewells are safe. I'm traveling with some valluable ones, aren't I, Forteskew?"

"That's a remarkable fine emerald ring your wearing, Mrs. Lemon, I should be careful of it," remarks the detectif. "May I examine it? Worth, I should say, about a thousand pounds, roughly?" and he passes it to Mr. Antony.

"Oh, you clever man," says Mrs. Lemon admiring, "eleven hundred to be exact that's worth. Isn't it, Forteskew?"

"The stones are perfect," Mr. Antony gives it back, "and I'm a judge, for I was in the trade once."

"I've always admired it," crys Gaby, "I dream of that ring sometimes. I'd steal it if I could. I've begged Hank to get me one like it, but no!"

"You got too much jewellry as it is," is Mr. Antony's firm retort.

"Can a woman have too much?" pouts Gaby. "One day I *will* steal that ring of Dolly's. I've took a fancy to it and I shan't rest till I have one like it, I warn you, Hank."

"Your always saying that, Gaby," coos Mrs. Lemon; "well, if my ring's stole I'll know who's got it. But you'll have to be quick, for we sail for little old New York tomorrow!"

We all laugh hearty at that, but the detectif turns round sharp and takes a good close-up of Gaby, and I don't know why, but all of a sudden I come all over uneasy.

I'm physic, and I get them warnings. But just then they tell the Pinkerton man that I'm the humble amatoor what saved the historick Allerton Ruby, and he looks interested at me.

"I've got great faith in a woman's intewition," he comments gracious. "Added to experients like mine it would be a great combirnation. Some day, Miss Angel, I may seek your help," and he presses my lilywhite mitt and takes his depart, leaving me that swelled-headed all my preminishion what I'd had does a fadeout.

"I'm glad your staying in the hotel with Gaby now we're going," says Dolly Lemon sweet.

"I'm glad the idea strikes you pretty, Mrs. Lemon," I retorts affable, not knowing if she's being rude or no, but taking no chances.

"Lee-moan," she corrects terse.

"Have it your own way," is my cheerful rejoin as we rise. I'm that happy I don't care if it snows pink ink, and when Mr. Antony he slips me thirty good Fishers to buy some frocks with, off I tootle alone, for Gaby was enn root for a matinnee with Mr. Lemon, and Mrs. dittto was tea dansonging it with Mr. Antony.

The Lemons was giving a dinner party in their private Suit to selebrate their last night to which I had a cordial invite, and I says adew till then.

This is the life, I thinks joyous. So I get a move on, and by six-thirty I'd done my shopping and me and my luggage was parked at the Savoy. Ponto, my little pup, I'd left behind with the landlady for a beggerly pittants so as to have no encumbrants.

BY 7 I was dolled up to kill in a new pillowbox red gown with the new Rushian blouse effeckt, and I was just putting the finishing touches to my schoolgirl complecktion when the telefone rung.

That'll be Gaby, I think, but I nearly have palpertation when a male voice speaks.

"Hartley the detectif speaking. Come to Mrs. Lemon's bedroom at once. I want your help."

Well, my heart missed a beat and I'd no time to ask what for, as he cut off too quick, so I powdered my nose hasty and was about to obey his summons when the bell went sharp again.

It *was* Gaby this time. "Come over," she invites. "I been in for hours. I got bored and left the mattinnee."

I said, "Righty oh, as soon as I'm dressed," and though I nearly tell her about the sluthe, I decide not. Then I steer hasty towards the Lemon Suit.

Mrs. Lemon opens the door herself, and when I see her dial I give a jump, for she's as white as death and her big eyes is starting out of her head. All the Persian cat fluffyness is fled.

"Oh, Angel," she moans, clutching my arm, "do come in. Swear you'll keep this secret. I'm ruined, ruined."

"You can trust me with your life's blood," I vow solemn, "so spill the

doings. Cheer up, Dolly, your not the first woman to be ruined, your not so orriginal as you think." And I laugh merry to comfort her, for I feel that sorry for the poor little thing, what's gone to pieces entirely, but Mr. Hartley he looks disdanefull at her as she flops onto the couch and shrugs his shoulders callous.

"Miss Angel," he begins brisk, "Mrs. Lemon has lost her emerald engagement ring, valued at eleven hundred pounds."

"What?" I demands horrifyed, "that lovely ring?"

"Forteskew will kill me," Dolly weeps, "all he thinks of is money, money, money. He give me the money to insure the ring, but I spent it on a dress bill I owed, and he thinks the ring's insured and it isn't. Oh, what shall I do?"

"The ring dissappeared between 3 this afternoon and half after 5 o'clock when Mrs. Lemon returned from the tea dansonging," says Mr. Hartley.

"Thank heaven that lets me out," I breathes fervent. "For I went out at 2 thirty and returned 6 thirty as I can prove."

"I've already ascertained your movements," says Sherlock Holmes. "And Mrs. Antony, having gone to the mattinnee with Mr. Lemon, can also prove a allerby."

My heart sinks to my shoes and then returns home by a zigzag root via my lungs and I gasp terror-struck, for I remember what Gaby said a few minutes ago, that she was bored and had been home for hours. but I pull myself up sharp, for he's lamping me like a eagel.

"It's as well Mrs. Antony *can* prove a allerby after her threat at lunch to steal the ring," he continues cassual.

"Surely you don't suspect poor darling Gaby," wails Mrs. Lemon.

"Everyone is under suspishion till the thief is found," announces Mr. Hartley, and I shudder again like I was a prisoner on the dock.

"Frankly," he says to me, "I am at a loss. There seems a total lack of clews. You say, Mrs. Lemon, that you took the ring off to wash and in your hurry went to the tea dansong without it, leaving it on the shelf over the washbowl?"

Dolly nods and rings her hands harrased.

"Your womanly intewition suggests nothing to you, Miss Angel?" he barks accusing, and I shakes my head, hoping I don't look as white as I feel.

"The servants?" I mutter, my brain seething like a rat in a trap.

"We've questioned them diskreetly. They know nothing."

"Clews, clews," he repeats frowning. "You found nothing?" he asks Dolly again, stern.

She rises. "I remember," she crys eager, "I did find something. Would this be a clew? I found it in front of the washbowl on the floor."

Then everything goes black before me as she holds a blue garter with a bunch of chiffong forget-me-notts attached. For I reckernised it instant.

It was one of 3 pairs I'd made myself last Xmas at Villefranche when I was recooperating from a fractured knee, a mauve pair with chiffong violets, a pink pair with chiffong roses, and a blue pair with chiffong forget-me-notts.

And I'd give them to Gaby for a Xmas gift, Gaby what had come home bored from the mattinnee this afternoon and had no allerby in consequents.

HOW I got away from that room I don't know, but I done it and I staggered to Gaby's door feeling like a hole in a bit of Grewyer cheese.

One thing was certain, I must save

her from the consequents of her folly. I was that mad with her I could of shot her, the silly fool.

Some women never know when there well off, I ponder savage. There's Gaby with a good hubby what can sign checks in a dozen languiges if he knew them, and because she takes a fancy to a ring she goes and pinches same, hoping the Lemons would not miss it in the hurry of depart.

She's ruined for good if it ever comes out, which it's bound to do with Bill the Bloodhound as hot on the trail as a cat at a kitchen door where someone's frying a kipper.

Something's got to be done and done quick. But what? If I go strait in to her and say, "You silly piecan to nip that ring," she'll deny it—I would myself—and valuable time will be lost.

Tact is what I'll have to rely on, trap her into admitting if I can, then when she's broke down, grab the ring and put it back somehow in the Lemon Suit.

"Hullo, ducks," calls Gaby cheery, "come in."

Well, you'd never think from her coolness she'd just got her fives into eleven hundred quid's worth, and I can't help but admire her. We chats about this and that, and final I mention the Lemons and she comes over all girlish and endevvers to raise a blush.

"Oh, Angel," she gurgles, "isn't Forteskew sweet? He likes me terrible, I can prove it."

I'm about to ask absent why when I see a blue garter hanging on the mirrow, and I see my chance. "You still got them garters I made you?" I drawl careless.

She fiddles with a platinnum chain round her neck and nods.

"There's only one here, where's it's twin?" I try to make my voice naturral, but she jumps startled and looks misterious.

"If I told you you'd know," she replys, "but I bet you'd of done the same in my place. If Hank found out he'd kill me, I bet."

Then my self-controll forsook me and I cry desperit, "For the love of Aller, Gaby, what the hadees are you playing at?"

She starts guilty. "Don't tell me Hank knows about the garter and the ring, Angel. There was no harm in it, I swear."

"No harm!" I crys bitter, "I should hate to say what you *call* harm then. No, Hank don't know yet, but——"

She sighs releived. "Mind you," she confides, "I wouldn't of took that ring if I hadn't of liked Forteskew. But I'll hoodwink Hank by and by and pretend to discover it cheap in an anteek shop, and then I can wear it in public."

I cluch my head wild. "Have you took leaf of what senses you ever had?" I begs horse. "This is a terrible crime you've did."

"There's no crime in taking a ring for a parting gift," she says defiant, "even if it is a valuable one. Forteskew's had it on order for three weeks now, and it's a exact copy of Dolly's. He give it to me this afternoon."

Half crazy I take her by the arm. "Do you mean to tell me——"

"I give Forteskew my blue garter for a keepsake," she goes on; "he wouldn't give me the ring till I did, but I got it now. Look," and she pulls out the platinnum chain from her bosom and hanging on it is Mrs. Lemon's missing ring.

I stagger back and grab the atmosphere for a fresh supply of oxeygen.

"Gaby," I say faint, "listen," and I'm about to warn her when there's a tap at the door and Mr. Antony

enters and Gaby shoves the ring back to its hiding place quick.

"Hullo, Angel," he says hearty, "your easy to gaze on this p. m., if a bit pale.

"Come along, girls, there waiting. The Pinkerton fellow is taking you into dinner, Angel. Are we all ready?"

And all chance of being alone with Gaby is gone.

WELL, I've heard of skellertons at feasts, and beleive me I give as fine a impersonnashion of one that dinner as ever I wish to give.

Mr. Lemon was a good understudy for me, and the detectif was that furtif and bristleing for clews in every word you said that I lost my nerve, and when the waiter spoke behind me sudden with the fizz when I wasn't expeckting, I give a shreik that made Dolly jump clean out of her chair.

But Gaby and Mr. Lemon they was chatty enough for us all untill the coffee and brandy was served, then sudden, without no warning, the minute the waiters had gone, Mr. Lemon asks right out, "Dolly, where's your emerald ring?"

I tell you the whole table went on a circuler tour and when my place come round to me again I just grabbed my old brandy and saved myself from throwing a faint in time. Mrs. Lemon was gazing terrifyed at her hubbyy, her big blue eyes swimming, but the detectif takes out his notebook professional.

"Mr. Lemon," he says busyness-like, "it's no use beating about the bush no longer. Mrs. Lemon had her ring stolen from her private bathroom this afternoon."

Forteskew jumps to his feet and crash goes his hot coffee over my dress, but I'm too far gone to care.

"What?" he crys in a rage.

"We have a clew," states Mr. Hartley. "Miss Angel identifyed that clew before dinner. I got her there for that purpose and her telltale face give her away."

"You lowlife," I shout rising, "so that's the help you wanted from me, eh?"

"Exactly," he smiles cruel. "Also I took the precawtion of overhearing your subsequent converse with Mrs. Antony.

"Mr. Antony," he turns to Hank, "I regret to have to accuse your wife of stealing a emerald ring valued at eleven hundred pounds from Mrs. Lemon's private bathroom.

"She's wearing it round her neck at this moment on that chain. Also, I think you, too, will reckernise this clew," and he produces the garter.

Mr. Antony stares petrifyde.

"My wife was at a mattinnee this afternoon," he whispers dull at last.

"She *made* me bring her home at 3," Mr. Lemon says quick. "I see why."

"Is this true, Gaby?" moans Hank frenzyed, and as Gaby just sits there frozen with horror, he crys: "My wife a theif! It's too terrible!"

"Gaby," I shakes her, but she don't take no notice of me, "are you going to sit there and say nix? Tell Mr. Antony how Mr. Lemon give you that ring for a keepsake?"

"Don't insult Mr. Antony's intelligents," sneers Mr. Lemon.

"You give it to her," I cry. "You know you did. You told her it was a copy of Dolly's, and she give you the garter for a keepsake."

He laughs amused at that and I nearly go dippy, for I see, too, what a feeble tale it is, although I beleive every word of it. Mr. Lemon's planted this on Gaby, why I don't know, and I got no clew to the mistery.

"I want to save Gaby as well as you, Angel," weeps Mrs. Lemon, "but even I can't believe Forteskew

give my valuable engagement ring to a woman, loving money as he does."

"Enough of this. Telefone the police," commands Mr. Lemon.

Mr. Antony jumps as if shot.

"No! No!" he protests. "For heaven's sake."

"Not the police," shreiks Mrs. Lemon, "they frighten me to death. Oh, I'm going to faint. My smelling bottle, quick, Angel, it's in my handbag," and I rush to her aid, for she's all but gone off.

"I'll make him have mercy," she moans, and she gradually recovvers, and I return to the scene of action where there's a hot argument on, Mr. Lemon having to be held back from the telefone and Mr. Antony nearly mad and the detectif garding Gaby sinickal what is still sitting back in her chair speechless.

"Oh," crys Mrs. Lemon from the corner, "you've took my evening bag, Angel," and I return it and kisses her fond and tell her no one blames her and she cuddles up babyish and says, "Thank you for them kind words, dear. I'll get up now," and I help her up.

"All Forteskew thinks of," she whispers, "is money. It's the money he's mad about, nearly losing eleven hundred like that. He's mercyless when roused, a devvil in human form," and she dabs her eyes.

"I *will* have the police in!" shouts Mr. Lemon. "Hands off me!"

"Can't we settle this?" pleads Mr. Antony. "I can't have my wife's good name ruined. I'm willing to pay heavy for your silents."

"Don't you insult me!" Mr. Lemon shakes his fist in Mr. Antony's face.

"Forteskew," interrupts Mrs. Lemon, "your forgetting Mr. Hartley's bill. I promised him a huge fee if he found the ring!"

"You what?" demands Forteskew.

"I'm not in the trailing trade for my health." Mr. Hartley smiles hard.

"I warned your wife I was an expensive hobby. My time's valuable."

"Oh!" Mr. Lemon is a bit decomposed at this turn of events.

"Now I don't love Scotland Yard as all private agentcys don't. Why should they walts in and get all the benefits of my deducktion?

"And although I'm a manhunter I'm a man first, and the sight of that poor butterfly broke on the wheel of life," he points poetic at Gaby, "well, I got a heart if you are devoid, Mr. Lemon.

"My advice to you, sir, is to take Mr. Antony's offer of, say, six thousand pounds and let his poor wife free."

"It's not enough," says Mr. Lemon agressive.

"Seven thousand," offers Mr. Antony dangling his checkbook, and we all watches Mr. Lemon, what looks at Gaby like a hungry wolf deprived of his prey.

"Eight thousand and I consent," he says at last, and Mrs. Lemon kisses Gaby fond and says: "Who of us is above temptation?" and as Mr. Antony takes out his pen and they all crowds round to watch him write, I seizes the first chance to read some bits of paper what has slipped accidental from Mrs. Lemon's evening bag when I was holding it and I give a woop of joy, for I got enough clews in one fell swoop to solve a dozen misterys.

"Half a tick!" I declames drammatic, "don't sign that check. Leave this matter to little Angel. It's a frame-up, the whole caboodle!"

Mr. Antony springs to his feet and Mr. and Mrs. Lemon goes pale and Mr. Hartley takes a step toward me threatening, but I get near the bell.

"One move from you," I warns them loud, "and I'll rouse the hotel. Mr. Antony, that ring of Mrs. Lemon's, you examined it to-day."

"It was genuiwine, Angy," he tells me. "Them stones was flawless."

"Righty, oh," I says. "Now take the ring from Gaby's neck and take an eyeful. It's a dud copy of the real doings."

"It's a lie," yells Mr. Lemon and makes a grab at Gaby what comes out of her trance like magic and hands the exhibitt to her hubby.

As I thought, she was doing a fine bit of acting all the time. That dased stuff is good busyness when your cornered. I've worked that gag myself once or twice.

"This ring's a fake," Mr. Antony crys indignant.

"So, Mr. Lemon. you did give Gaby that ring and made her give you her garter," I announces.

"And you framed this up on her with a dud tec to twist Mr. Antony for a good fat check.

"And we'd of bought it like suckling doves if sweet, little, innercent Dolly hadn't overacted her part when fainting at the thought of Scotland Yard, the dear baby, to keep me busy and her gold wig slipped and showed a lock of black hair beneath.

"That roused my curyosity, and then I seen the evidents what slipped by *pure accident* out of her bag.

"First this bill from the Synthettic Stone Co. for one copy of emerald ring—twenty-five pounds. Being a chorus lady by profession the Synthettic Stone Co. is well known to me, alas!

"You was frightened to give the real ring to Gaby in case she might be a real crook herself, because you never know."

I pawses for breath and they stare at me like pillows of salt.

"Then there's this note what reads: 'Will arrive hotel as directed Tuesday disgised as Hartley, a Pinkerton tec. Your loving husband, Frankie.'

"Your crazy," crys Frankie. "Lemon, call up Scotland Yard."

"Cut it out, Frankie," growls Lemon, "she's got us cold."

"You fade out by the morning," interrups Mr. Anthony fierce," or I'll do a spot of telefoning to the Yard myself, you bunch of dud crooks."

"Give me the third paper you nicked," Dolly yells sudden, what had been gropping in her bag, and she calls me a name what was new to me, in public anyway, and what don't fit in with her baby stare.

"Be reasonable," I soothes her, "that's my Ace of Clews. It's as well to have a ace up your sleeve, Dolly, and I realise this was your ace if things went wrong, but like Sydney Harbour, my need is greater than thine. Goodbye for ever," and I glides graceful after the Antonys into the night.

"HANK," pleads Gaby tearfull, "forgive me."

"I'll never live with you no more," and he throws her off him. "A wife what gives garters to other men is no wife of mine."

I takes her sobbing to her room and returns.

"It's no good Angel," he says obstinate, "a wife what flings garters——"

"Well," I sighs reflective, "it's praps a cheaper hobby to fling garters about than this Ace of Clews I got here, what is a check payable to Dolly Lemon, date to day, for five hundred pounds, also a loving note——"

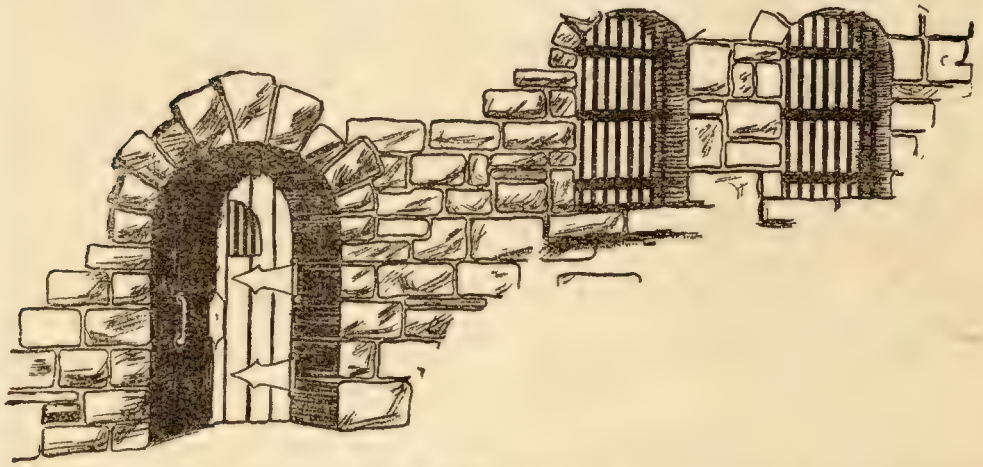
"My heaven, Angel," he gibbers, s-s-sh. Gaby might overhear."

"I'll tear the Ace of Clews up now if you forgive Gaby at once."

"Angel," whispers the chasened Mr. Anthony, "I will."

So I tears up the Ace of Clews with a yorn. I was wore out. The village blacksmith said a mouthful. That something attempted something done stuff is worth all the sleeping drafts in the world.

Scarlet Snow



By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

A VAST red tornado rose in the north and wrecked an ancient empire. It nearly wrecked a table as well.

The table stood four square to the world, but its polished mahogany was sadly scarred and pitted with sabre cuts and rifle bullets, not to mention lesser scratches from steel-shod boots contemptuous of mahogany.

The dark stains left by the wounds of the wrecked bodies of crippled men had stained it. The quiet shadows of the impassive bodies of the dead had dulled it. It was a tarnished wreck of empire.

But the old table must have rejoiced this night, for it was surrounded by other tarnished wrecks of empire. It tried desperately to reflect the ancient glory of scarlet and gold and the glitter of jeweled decorations that they insisted upon retaining.

The Tsar might be dead and his vast cohorts dissipated to the four winds, but this little band of officers clung on here in far-off Siberia.

As was fitting, Cossack soldier servants stood alertly waiting behind each chair to refill glasses with pale vodka. But the vodka could not have been its old potent self tonight, for there was an unusual silence around the board.

The gray-haired *polkovnik* at the head of the table felt it very keenly. He avoided the questioning eyes that searched his face.

It was natural that they should wait for him. A *veliki kniaz,* with imperial blood flowing in his veins, was rare enough in these days and times.

And this *veliki kniaz* had commanded glittering, burnished steel squadrons of the Chevalier Garde before the Red Terror swept that imperial bodyguard of noblemen out of existence.

Besides that he was their colonel,

leading these few *sotnias* of loyal Cossacks of the Ussuri against the Red hordes in Siberia.

"Gaspoda!" his voice broke out at last, making everyone turn swiftly to hear his words. "Gentlemen, he was my kinsman! It is my privilege to run my sword through him if ever he is caught." There was pain in his harsh voice.

A low growl of acquiescence rose from the listening officers.

"*Bolshoi moi!*" he continued, "that my brother's wife s h o u l d have whelped such spawn! To leave like a thief in the night!

"He had shame enough, at least, to leave his sabre behind. I would like to run him through with his own sword and then break the filthy thing in pieces!"

"It is your right," someone near at hand growled, and a buzz of questions and answers arose, everyone talking at once as is the habit of Russians.

"And what do you say, Nicholas Semionovich, you who were his closest friend?" some asked the scowling, fair-haired young captain at the far end of the table, and everyone turned curiously to await his reply.

"I say, kill the dog!" His face grew suddenly livid. "He's no friend of mine," and he rose, dragging at his sabre, the vodka he had been sipping mechanically all evening suddenly exploding within him.

"I say death to all traitors and death to Dimitri Vassilivich, the blackest traitor of all!" he shouted in a deep-toned bellow.

With an answering shout the mercurial Russians surrounding the table leaped to their feet, pulling sabres from clanging scabbards and raising them high in the air.

"Death to him! Death to Dimitri Vassilivich!"

The shouts re-echoed through the large room and were carried in the night air, out past the barracks and to the farthest line of sentries pacing along the bank of the dark Ussuri, sentries who paused a moment to wonder what it was all about.

IT did not carry as far as the line of enemy sentinels across the river, stalwart men who wore a crossed hammer and sickle on their caps. These men guarded a sprawling cantonment of mud-daubed huts—log huts floored with hard-packed earth.

It was in one of these huts that the muchly execrated "traitor," Dimitri Vassilivich, awakened to the clamor of a strident voice in his ears.

He fixed his startled gaze on the apparition that stood in the doorway—for the life of him he could not tell whether the man was a soldier, a peasant or part of a nightmare.

Puzzlement and anger struggled in his mind, while he drove the sleep from his eyes. If this fellow was a soldier, then Dimitri Vassilivich did not think much of Red soldiers.

In the first place, the only sign of a uniform was the cap, a helmet-shaped affair decorated rudely with a red star surmounted by a crossed hammer and sickle.

His clothes, otherwise, were nondescript, greasy trousers tucked into clumsy boots, soiled blouse, rent and torn and belted in at the waist with a frayed piece of rope.

He was dirty past all imagining. His hair and beard were shaggy and unkempt, a wild tangle from which peered his eyes, small piggy eyes, bloodshot and possessing a half-malicious, half-sullen look.

Some semblance of a soldier was given him by the crossed bandoliers, plentifully filled with ammunition, and by the great rifle slung over his shoulder.

In the second place, he had entered without knocking, an unforgivable crime in a soldier. And last, and most revolting was his greeting.

No one but an officer of the old school, accustomed to its almost doglike deference from soldiers, to their unquestioned and blind obedience, could grasp the shocking effect of that greeting.

"Tovorishtch Kommandir!" he had shouted in a strident voice, if Dimitri Vassilivich's ears did not deceive him. "Comrade Commander!"

Comrade Commander!

The young officer rose from the narrow bed, with its stinking coverlets, and placed his feet on the grimy floor of the little room.

A hot rebuke rose to his lips but remained unuttered as realization dawned on him.

"Comrade Commander!" he growled under his breath. "Comrade Commander and sainted political agent and holy Commissar!"

He kicked angrily to settle his feet into the soft, tight boots, their dullness showing the absence of his orderly's assiduous care as did his silver spurs, already grimy and turning black.

"What do you want?" he barked at the man who leaned easily against the door, picking his teeth with a long sliver of wood, curiously watching the officer's toilette.

It is not meet that a soldier should watch his superior dressing, and Dimitri grew angrier under the continued impertinent surveillance.

The soldier continued to stare, the unfriendly, sullen, half-malicious look still in his eyes.

"What do you want?" Dimitri repeated, as he rose and flung on the long Cossack coat, dark olive green, with its silver and ivory cartridge cases across the chest.

There was something menacing in the crouch of his tall figure, something dangerous in the steady glare of his eyes, set widely apart above his smooth shaven face. He made one step toward the soldier. The man quailed under his glare.

"Tovorish — Excellency"—he corrected, stammering—"the Commissar commands"—he stuttered again —"the Commissar would like to see the high-born Excellency in his office immediately," and he backed out, leaving the tall young officer standing, the faint smile of amusement at the sudden change of front in the soldier fading into a look of anger, as the significance of the message dawned on him.

He cursed the greasy Commissar, but prepared to obey.

The regiments of the Red army are classified from Soviet headquarters as "reliable," "semi-reliable" and "doubtful."

To every regiment is attached the same number of Communist agents, a group of eight or ten comrades forming the "cell," headed by a political guide, a man known for his fervor and his gift of oratory.

And at the head of the whole affair, watching colonel and officers and men, and supervising the activities of cell and political guide, is the Commissar.

"Doubtful" regiments receive no greater number of Communist agents than do "reliable" regiments. But the personnel is more carefully picked.

STEFAN STEFANOVICH, the man who had sent for Dimitri, was the Commissar of a "doubtful" regiment.

The title of the Commissar, in the full sonorous music of the Russian tongue, is enough in itself to make a simple-minded man rejoice in its possession.

"Extraordinary Commissar of the

Central Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Red Army Deputies."

It is long enough in English, but in the rolling, Russian tongue it becomes almost a chant.

But Stefan Stefanovich was not overcome with the grandeur of his title.

With the removal of old bureaucracies and before the blight of officialdom has had time to settle on the new, one can find many men who really labor enthusiastically.

Stefan Stefanovich was one of those rare types of officials who take their work more seriously than they take themselves.

This was an artillery regiment. Artillery is peculiarly annoying in that no amount of communistic fervor will affect in the slightest degree the imperturbable laws that govern elevation, deflection and height of burst.

The commander of the regiment when Stefan Stefanovich arrived was engrossed in teaching his officers the use of the dueling sword.

Therefore, the new Commissar did some heavy thinking, and as a result of that thinking, Dimitri Vassilivich now stood before him.

Stefan Stefanovich, either with some memory of pre-revolutionary courtesy or in irony, rose politely and bowed, showing the tall young officer a seat.

Dimitri snorted and remained standing, looking not unlike a cat ready to spring.

Stefan Stefanovich was as tall as the young man before him, but looked slightly heavier in build, principally because of the great fur coat he wore constantly, its high marten collar half concealing his heavy red beard.

His eyes gazed out from under shaggy eyebrows, with an air of faint puzzlement at the intractability of the officer before him.

"I took the liberty of sending for you, Dimitri Vassilivich, that we might come to an understanding.

"You were a little hot-headed last night, and I regret that my men had to treat you somewhat roughly. You see, they have orders to protect me against sudden death," he apologized ironically, a faint gleam of amusement in his eyes. "I wish again to tender to you the honor of commanding this regiment of artillery."

"Stefan Stefanovich, you played me a dog's trick by forging a letter from my fiancée to get me within your lines."

Dimitri's face was pale, his eyes glowed.

"It is one thing to catch a hawk, it is quite a different thing to make that hawk do your bidding and fly at the quarry you select.

"I will rot in hell before I give a single word of instruction to your muckle-headed cannoneers or your greasy officers!"

Stefan Stefanovich's face expressed only a mild concern.

"That is exceedingly unfortunate," he remarked suavely, "but, of course, I had to foresee just some such contingency."

Rising from his chair, he picked a paper from his desk and handed it to Dimitri with a slightly mocking bow.

"If you will read and digest that, it may lead you to change your mind. You will find pen and ink on my desk wherewith to sign it," and the red-bearded figure in its great coat moved over, to gaze out the window, a faintly weary look in his eyes.

There followed a long silence, then a half stifled groan.

The red-bearded Commissar made no move to turn around.

Another long silence and he heard

behind him a dry sob, quickly repressed. Still he did not turn.

He continued to gaze out the window, his fingers drumming idly on the sash. Listening intently, he finally heard the silence interrupted with the scratch of pen on paper.

He turned slowly and gravely, his face full of well-simulated concern, in time to see the young officer throw the pen from him and lean, pale and shaken, against the wall, his head sunk on his hands.

Quietly, his brows still raised with an air of deprecating concern, the Commissar examined the still wet signature. Then he nodded his head slowly and regretfully.

"Now," he spoke softly, "if you will be so good as to start on your new duties today we will consider the matter satisfactorily adjusted, as long"—his voice hardened slightly—"as long as the—er—er—quality of the instruction is useful to us.

"You see," he purred unctuously, "there are many ways of taming wild hawks."

The young officer straightened out as from the lash of a whip.

Trembling slightly, he took one or two short, quick steps back and forth, lithe, soft steps, soundless, like the padding of a wild animal in its cage.

Then he came to a sudden halt before the watchful Commissar.

"My dear Stefan Stefanovich"—his mouth smiled but his eyes did not—"my dear Commissar, your methods, at any rate are quite unique."

"You have won the first cast of the dice," and he bowed gravely in mock compliment, "but there will follow other casts. Until then I hope that your good health will be maintained."

Stefan Stefanovich flushed a dull red.

"Are you presuming to threaten me?" he growled.

"Threaten?" The young officer looked surprised. "Not I, for threatened men live too long," and he was gone.

The Commissar remained standing looking after him, a faintly puzzled frown on his face.

THE MUD daubed hut looked even dirtier and grimier when Dimitri Vassilivich returned to it with dragging steps.

So he was a regimental commander at last! He smiled bitterly and mirthlessly. Such a regiment! In such an army! And at such a cost!

Forced to direct the fire of his batteries against his own class, his own friends and kinsmen across the river, against his own honor and against all that life held dear.

What would they think of him on the other side of the Ussuri, his uncle, Ivan Alexandrovich, that stern old fire-eater, or his good friend, Alexieff, who had helped him bring his mother and his sister and Nadine across to Siberia from the Red Terror in Moscow.

His brother officers of the Ussuri Cossacks? Scions of old princely houses like himself—he knew what they would think of him.

And Nadine? What would she think? Nadine would understand, probably the only one in the world that would understand, for she was Nadine, her eyes full of steadfast love, her whole being filled with faith and trust in him.

His mother? He dared not think of his mother.

"The honor of the family is in your keeping!" she had said, when he had first returned from the Imperial Cadet College, proud of his new uniform, the golden eagles on his shoulder-straps and his shining sabre.

"Your elder brother disappeared so many years ago that he must

surely be dead by now," and that brooding note of wistfulness came into her voice that the memory of Paul, his elder brother, always evoked. "You are the head of the house, and you must be worthy, my son."

And she had looked at him with that half-proud, half-anxious look that mothers will show to their sons.

The head of his house! He gazed around him ruefully, at the dirty little room, at the passing soldiers seen through the window, at his fur cap on which he had been forced to affix a red star.

A fine head of his house he was, a house that had fought for Tsar and country since the days of Yaroslav the Wise.

Paul, that elder brother whom he had never known except as a dim shadowy figure of his youth, might be a drunken wastrel, but surely he would have made a better attempt to be the head of the house than this.

No, his mother would not understand and he could not blame her.

Well, for all this loss he had gained a regiment. He had dreamed of commanding a regiment, as all young officers dream.

He had visualized himself walking down the lines of the massed battalions with the long-drawn, barking Russian salute in his ears, the sustained shouting of thousands of men, sounding like the long rolling tattoo of the drums, wishing "A health to your Excellency!"

Well, he had his regiment, and it was all ashes to the taste. He wondered bitterly if life was always like that, if nothing could be gained without losing something more precious.

He was certainly in a hole. The Commissar had him, tied and shackled, and there was nothing to do but accept the situation and bide his time.

Slow days dragged into leaden-footed weeks, weeks in which he drove the nondescript soldiery and officers into some sort of understanding of the nondescript guns.

The regiment began at last to function as a regiment of artillery, a salvo of fire could be loosed with some chance of hitting the targets.

Stefan Stefanovich watched and rejoiced, and tippled a little brandy in his satisfaction at the progress being made. He reeled a little as he walked about the camp in his great fur coat, with the high marten skin collar. For the salvos of fire from the strangely assorted guns would inevitably disintegrate the White Forces across the river.

ONE drizzly day when the clouds seemed to be weighing down the earth with their oppressiveness, a soldier slouched into Dimitri's cabin with a letter. It was from his mother.

"My dear son," it commenced, "word has come to me of the terrible thing that you are doing. The Red officer who arrested us told me of your sacrifice. He stated that we are to be held as hostages to secure your loyalty to the Bolsheviki. If this is true, then it is a terrible thing. God will surely punish these people.

"But I pray God on bended knees that you will forget us. They can only hurt us a little in our bodies. But your actions, my son, are killing my soul.

"I would rather die a thousand deaths than have you dishonor me and the memory of your dead father. I would rather suffer years of torture than have you traitorously serve those people for five minutes.

"The disappearance of your brother Paul has always been an open wound in my heart. But I would rather know that he were dead for certain than have him know of your

disgrace. I would far rather that you were dead than living in dishonor.

"I have lost one son. And surely as you continue with your aid to those enemies of God and man, I will feel that I have lost both of my sons. I shall look upon you as dead."

Dimitri dropped the letter to the floor, sick at heart, his soul heavy within him. More bitter than dead sea fruit was his sacrifice and the result of his sacrifice. He groaned aloud as might some fallen knight, driven forth into the darkness and the rain from his high estate, with the crash of falling towers behind him and a lifetime of hopeless wandering before him.

Sitting there in his narrow cabin, the rain dripping from the eves, monotonously and despondingly, he seemed alone in the world, dizzy in the midst of chaos, with time and space whirling about him.

His mind turned gropingly to thoughts of Nadine, her slender body proud and erect, her eyes wistful and kind and understanding, filled with a melting tenderness and sympathy that could encompass his bruised spirit.

It seemed to his tired and bewildered brain there in the shadow, that only one real thing existed in the world at that moment, his great longing for Nadine and his great need for her comfort.

And then she came.

A quick tapping at the door, a smothered, eager voice, and then the sudden sight of her standing there, framed in the doorway, dripping a little from the rain, in her eyes a look of glorious happiness.

Like the reality of some splendid dream she stood for a second, and then comprehension came into her eyes. With a little half cry of pity she ran to him swiftly and swept his head to her bosom as a mother, alive with tenderness, shelters the head of her hurt child. Of a sudden the world seemed a better place.

With faint half-spoken endearments, such as all women know, she soothed him gently, "Tell me," she whispered, "tell Nadine."

Swaying a little from drink Stefan Stefanovich stood in the open door, gazing with cynical amusement on the tableau before him. The downcast head of Dimitri was pillowed on Nadine's shoulder, Nadine kneeling, alive with tenderness and pity.

Startled, the two arose, Nadine wide-eyed and frightened, Dimitri white with rage.

Stefan Stefanovich, the Commissar, gazed at Nadine, his eyes shining evilly as he took in her slim perfection, her glorious coloring and her great eyes, glowing under her golden hair, coifed low on her white forehead.

Dimitri softly stepped in front of her, half crouching, ready to strike.

"My signed agreement with you, Stefan Stefanovich," his voice grated harshly into the silence, "extends only to my work. If that work is well done I am under no obligation to undergo the indignity of suffering your presence under my roof."

The Commissar, swaying slightly in his great fur coat, dragged his eyes unwillingly from Nadine, as the sting of the words slowly bit home through his befuddled brain. He flushed a dull red and turned toward the door. There he paused and fumbled thickly for words.

"You forget, *Tovorishtch Kommandir,*" he mumbled, "that our regulations forbid the presence of women in camp." And with that he was gone, after another look at the girl.

Nadine crept to her lover. "What an evil man," she moaned, "he frightened me so with his ugly look. I must go, Dimitri."

"He is not what you might call saintly," Dimitri answered grimly, "but he will do nothing. Rest yourself a while until I dry your cloak."

But the cloak was not destined to be dried by that fire that night. It was only a few moments until the stamp of feet outside, the crash of ground arms and the shouted order to open the door, sent Dimitri's hand feeling for his missing sabre and brought Nadine up frightened.

The door was opened and a file of soldiers entered, headed by Ilyitch, the political guide of the regiment, a sallow-faced, burning-eyed individual who could slaughter thousands of men fervently happy in the belief that he was advancing the sacred cause.

"Tovorishtch Kommandir!" he announced in a loud and dramatic voice. "The Commissar commands that we arrest this woman and that we put you under arrest in your quarters for defiance of regulations."

The soldiers behind him nodded violently in confirmation of his words, "Yes, yes," they echoed, "we heard him say so, *Tovorishtch Kommandir.*"

And they smiled amiably like the children they were.

So they led Nadine away, a haunting look of appeal in her eyes as she was torn from Dimitri, who was gently but firmly held back by the two soldiers left to guard him.

"Do not fear, *Tovorishtch Kommandir,*" they soothed him, "the little dove will be quite comfortable. The Commissar does not mean to put her in prison. He commanded that she be brought to his own house. Indeed, yes, he will be very kind to her," they said, attempting to comfort him, for they had reasoned out among themselves that the young commander was not a half bad sort when you came to know him.

WHAT a strangely dark, mysterious thing a house can be when it silently holds the beloved and one other. The very walls have a superior gloating air as though saying: "Ah, you can guess, but we *know!*"

There was not even the murmur of voices from the Commissar's house; all seemed silent within.

It had not been much of a task to win over the two soldiers, Dimitri's guards, who were kindly disposed toward him. The greater task would be to restrain himself from killing Stefan Stefanovich with his bare hands. He had a better fate than this planned out for the Commissar.

Swinging lightly over the balcony railing, he tried the door. It was firmly locked from the inside.

He dropped to the ground, springing easily and lightly and circled around the house to the rear door. This he also found locked.

Then he tried the windows, unsuccessfully one after another. Evidently Stefan Stefanovich did not mean to be disturbed. The sweat began to pour from Dimitri, and his breath to labor with the anxiety and the strain.

Above him he noticed a small window. With a light spring he reached it and pulled himself up. It was unlocked.

So small was it that he had great difficulty in working his shoulders through the narrow opening, but he finally landed, catlike and noiseless, on the floor.

He had entered what was evidently a pantry, judging by the heavily laden shelves. He pushed his way out of this into a kitchen, which was dimly illuminated by the small fire under an icon. Russian-like, Dimitri paused a second to bow and cross himself in front of this.

After this rite, he slowly and carefully opened the door into a dining-room. Here he could see a dim light

in the rooms ahead and hear the murmur of voices.

HE crossed the dining-room on silent feet and came to rest behind some portieres, at the entrance of a drawing-room.

He saw Nadine seated on a couch, her face pale, her eyes piteous with fright.

Standing in front of her, swaying slightly, a glass of vodka in his hand, stood Stefan Stefanovich, his eyes gleaming drunkenly underneath his heavy eyebrows, his great red beard tangled and unkempt.

"It is foolish, little dove, to be so unfriendly," he was leering at her, "he will never know."

He spoke thickly and gutturally, as though the vodka had not only thickened his understanding but had coarsened his voice as well.

Dimitri drew a deep breath, an exhilarating throb was in his heart and his body seemed made of steel springs. He moved nearer.

"Besides, little one," Stefan continued to leer, with a heavy attempt at affectionate regard, "I am master here. I have but to say the word and pouf! He is gone like that." He snapped his fingers. "Yes, indeed, I am master here," and he strutted as men sometimes will with wine and women.

"It is indeed a pleasure to be entertained by a master." Dimitri stepped into the room, smiling pleasantly, as though a guest bidden to the party.

"By a master of anything, anywhere," he continued, his voice as silky and purring as that of some jungle cat. "Even a master buffoon!" he concluded, his eyes bright.

Nadine half rose, then sank back, gazing, half fascinated, at Stefan Stefanovich who, without a tremor of his drunken muscles, slowly put the glass in his hand on the little table.

"So ho, my fine young cockerel, those rascally soldiers let you out, did they?" he replied easily.

"Why, yes," and Dimitri's eyes laughed at him. "Even in their crude way they esteemed it discourteous that a man should extend an invitation to the fiancée of a young cockerel without inviting the young cockerel."

The Commissar's brow darkened slightly.

"Boastful words are as tiresome as the rattling of dried peas in a pod," he quoted heavily.

"The rattling of dried peas in a pod is as tiresome as the clumsy antics of an old man trying vainly to charm the young and beautiful," Dimitri countered swiftly and lightly. Then, turning to Nadine, "I had no fear that this old wreck could harm you, but I was afraid that you would be bored to death."

The Commissar's face flushed redder than his trembling red beard. With the roar of an angry bull he sprang at Dimitri, who waited his onset poised lightly on the balls of his feet, all set like a steel trap.

They locked together, swaying and stumbling over the rugs. The small table fell with a crash of bottles and glasses. Swinging, twisting and striking, they worked their way across the room.

A sudden warning scream from Nadine was followed by the crash of a falling body. Then the tall, standing lamp was knocked over, plunging the room into darkness.

THERE is no stranger phenomenon than the speed with which a whisper will eddy and coil through a camp of soldiers.

Before the dawn of the next morning, there was not a man in camp

who did not know of the happenings within that dark house at midnight.

And there was not a man in camp who did not wait, breathlessly, for the aftermath.

So quickly does word spread that crowds of half-dressed soldiers lined the main street of the camp long before dawn, silent and waiting. They had not long to wait.

From the door of the Commissar's house in the darkness came the guttural notes of a voice giving a command.

Then followed the stamp of heavy boots and the rattle of arms. Nearer and nearer came the sound of marching feet in the darkness, the steady rise and fall of the boots of marching soldiers.

Suddenly, at the head of the street, a vague, moving blot detached itself from the shadows. It came nearer as the sound of marching grew greater. Nearer and nearer it came.

It began to assume form and substance until, as it passed, it resolved itself into two files of marching soldiers, fully armed, guarding someone half stumbling, half walking, between them.

Men gazed with fascinated eyes at the prisoner. He was tall and well built, his face smooth shaven, his hands bound behind his back, a cloth gag in his mouth. A long Cossack coat, dark olive green, covered him.

"The Kommandir!" A whisper went traveling fearsomely through the crowd.

The soldiers and their prisoners passed.

Behind them, stalking with heavy, remorseless tread, his head sunk in the collar of his great fur coat, followed the figure of Stefan Stefanovich, the Commissar, his red beard concealed under his high marten skin collar.

The clump of boots grew fainter and fainter through the darkness of early dawn, until they could be heard no more.

But the men neither moved nor spoke. They waited, tense, scarce daring to breathe, their hands cupped to their straining ears.

Suddenly the silence of dawn was broken. A crashing volley of musketry jarred the air, echoing and re-echoing so that they jumped, startled.

A silence followed, dread and brooding, and the dim figures on the street crossed themselves devoutedly, with a faint prayer for another soul winging its way to eternity. They faded into the barracks like the dispelling of a morning mist.

The street was deserted when the firing squad returned, without the bound and gagged prisoner. The great fur coat of the Commissar disappeared within his own house.

The daylight stir of the camp commenced as though the tragic events of the dawn had not been.

RUSSIA is a country with an easy acceptance of tragedy. The weight of horror soon lifted from the camp. Men began to smile significantly at the aftermath of the execution of the young Kommandir.

"To the victor belongs the spoils," they nodded sagely, not finding it in their hearts to blame the red bearded Commissar for remaining indoors with his new-found treasure.

Only one individual had the temerity to invade his retreat. Illyitch, the pale-faced, fugitive-eyed political guide, always feeling his responsibilities pressing on him, knocked on the door a few hours after the execution and was bidden to enter.

But even Illyitch was aware of the proprieties, and stood bashfully without.

"Stefan Stefanovich!" he called

through the door. "What disposition do you wish made of the family of the traitor, Dimitri Vassilivich?"

The answer came in a bored tone. "No use bothering with them. Give them a safe conduct through our lines and see that they get to the White Army forces immediately. Bring me word when this is accomplished."

The camp routine went on much as usual. The big Commissar remained within doors and on the morning of the following day, Ivan Illyitch shouted through the partially open door, that the family of the traitor, Dimitri Vassilivich, had been taken to the outposts of the White Forces across the river and now were among their own friends.

That afternoon curious soldiers saw the tall form and the heavy fur coat of Stefan Stefanovitch step into a *troika* and seat himself beside the beautiful girl, who had so lately arrived in camp.

The Commissar's red beard was concealed in his high marten skin collar, raised against the cold. The two drove out of camp together to the accompaniment of many jingling bells on the high yoke of the three-horse sleigh.

"Our Commissar is taking his little dove for the fresh air," sagely commented the envious soldiers.

THE sleigh with its two passengers was well beyond the outposts and slipping smoothly through the snow, on the way toward the river.

The man in the fur coat threw back the heavy collar, but instead of the red-bearded countenance of the Commissar, the beardless face and wide-apart, sleepy eyes of Dimitri Vassilivitch smiled happily at the girl.

"We will soon be safe," he comforted her in an effort to lighten the brooding sorrow that rested in her eyes.

"Praise God!" he exulted, "that nightmare is over." And he gazed at her fondly, his thought reverting back to the firing squad and the huddled figure it had left behind, a figure which had died, crazily clutching the scarlet snow.

"Smile, Nadine," he pleaded, "it is all over. He fell like the dog he was. No one recognized him with his red beard shaved off. The firing squad was completely deceived. Why, the man looked enough like me to have been my own brother!"

She flinched suddenly, as though struck. Her eyes were filled with something like horror and she began to tremble.

"Could you not see, Dimitri——" The words faltered on her tongue as she placed her hand on his arm.

"Could I not see what?" he demanded.

He was studying the road ahead and therefore missed the sick look of misery in her eyes.

"Could I not see what?" he repeated, turning toward her.

Nadine shivered. Of course, he had never really known his brother, but——

"What could I not see?" Dimitri asked again, and his smile recklessly flung her fears to the winds.

Nadine's tightly compressed lips parted with an effort.

"Nothing."

And then, as Dimitri laughed and his chin jerked sharply upward in careless contempt for the so recently escaped horror of the firing squad, she knew she could never tell him the truth.

Never.

Because it was that same peculiarly sharp upward tilt of the chin that always reminded Nadine of his mother.

And would always remind her now of Stefan Stefanovich, the Commissar.

The Web and The Net

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

A TWO PART STORY—PART I

CHAPTER I

AN ILL WIND

THE express was twenty-five minutes late, yet it stopped at the Junction to accommodate three young travelers.

"Say, what's the idea? We'll be an hour behind at the Terminal."

The red-faced passenger, with the loud and harsh voice, was not the only one to resent this curious departure from a schedule already abused, but his complaint was the most vehement.

"And no wonder," he cried, "with all these tanks and hick burgs! Center Falls was bad enough, but now this dump——"

The express had been scheduled to stop at Center Falls, but had gained only one passenger there. And she now sat directly in back of the red-faced complainant.

A girl of nineteen or twenty, dressed with an attractive simplicity, she was blushing, visibly embarrassed by his loud advertisement of the rural community from which she departed.

"Privilege, that's all it is," declared a small, radical man from across the aisle.

"What privilege?" inquired the florid one.

"Special privilege. You didn't see why we have to stop here. But I recognized 'em—Raynold's two sons. Raynold can make any train on this road run backward for him. Sure he can, with his dirty millions."

The other seemed hardly impressed.

"Huh!" he remarked.

"A train load of us plain, common people," said the radical with vindictive relish, "we can wait on a couple of college boys because their father has wealth——"

"Get him a soap-box," a voice advised, provoking derisive comment.

"It was the Raynold boys, though,"

said one. "They went into the car ahead. And, oh gosh, what fur coats!"

"Just the thing for this Indian summer."

"But it's colder around a college, maybe."

"Did you see who it is they have with 'em?"

"The lad looked kind of familiar."

"Familiar, I'll say so. Tony Morrison!"

"The football player?"

"Sure it was. He's out for a couple of weeks, I read. Busted his rib in a practice scrimmage."

The young passenger who journeyed away from Center Falls had heard of Anthony Morrison and his exploits. If, indeed, it was he in the car ahead, she might see the injured athletic star and his bodyguard of Raynolds when they arrived at the Terminal.

But as she was reflecting on this probable glimpse of greatness, a strange youth invaded the car and began to shout her name.

"Miss Wade—telegram for Miss Wade! Miss E. Wade! Telegram! Any Miss Wade in here?"

He was without coat or cap, an impromptu messenger from the Junction railroad office. In his hand he had the yellow envelope that held a message for her; yet Ellen Wade neither called out nor beckoned to him. She did not attempt to identify herself.

"Telegram! Telegram for Miss Wade!"

He was hurrying through the last car now, and she let him go, remaining guiltily silent, staring out of the window, glad when the train began to move at last.

It did not seem possible that anybody could be informed of her destination without knowing the reason for her journey. And she did not mean to be restrained by telegraphic cautioning.

Premonition and not mere timidity, she assured herself, had caused her to avoid the evidently urgent message. She had not feared the notice of her fellow passengers, however loquacious.

The passing remarks of strangers were the least she had to be afraid of in this adventure.

"Looks like we'll make up some lost time," said the red-faced traveler.

"Oh, sure," the persistent radical jeered. "No son of a Raynold can be kept lingering along this right-of-way. With all those millions——"

THE express, in fact, was but ten minutes late at the Terminal. And Ellen saw the tall and good-looking Tony Morrison, flanked by the Raynold brothers in burly and swaddling coonskin coats, who bestowed battered, capacious bags upon a pair of grinning optimists in porters' uniforms.

The three college boys were not indifferent to the interest they aroused; nor were they disposed to ignore the presence of a pretty girl among the other passengers. Ellen Wade hurried on through the crowd to check her own small bag.

No doubt their manifest admiration pleased her, but she found herself oppressed by misgivings, too, now that she had hastened to the city.

And she quickly sought a taxicab and asked the driver to take her to that address mentioned in her uncle's letters.

Half an hour later she stood on the eleventh floor of an impressive office building, before a glass door with the number, 1119, and the name of a business firm, Galligan & Britt, Inc.

Entering eagerly, Ellen was con-

fronted by a girl who sat beside a small telephone switchboard.

"Is Mr. Jennings in?"

Ellen's mild inquiry seemed to stupefy the girl.

"No—not Mr. Jennings," she said after a moment.

"Could you tell me where I may find him, please?"

The girl favored her now with a stare which shouted her distrust.

"We don't know where——" she began. But then, regaining something of an obviously normal impudence, she said: "Who wants to know, Miss?"

"I am Mr. Jennings' niece, Miss Wade," said Ellen.

"A relation?"

"His niece."

Ellen was patient, for the girl's manner had altered surprisingly. No longer suspicious or hostile or insolent, she seemed baffled by something she associated with Ellen's call.

It was plain that she wished to be kind but discreet, and to transfer the problem to higher authority.

"I guess you'd better talk to Mr. Britt or Mr. Galligan, Miss Wade," said she.

"I'd like to, if possible."

The girl rose briskly and went into an adjoining office. In a moment she returned to say:

"Mr. Britt, he's not in right now, Miss Wade. "But Mr. Galligan asks will you please wait."

"Certainly," said Ellen. She was disturbed, but tried to compose herself. And this effort was not prolonged. She had scarcely seated herself when Galligan came out of the next office and greeted her with disconcerting warmth.

"Miss Wade—Joe Jennings' niece? I'm Tom Galligan—Frank Britt's partner," he cried.

He was a tall, heavy, loudly dressed man, the kind who advertises his own good nature with outbursts of mirth and cordiality.

"It's kind of you to see me," said Ellen. "I am here to locate my uncle."

"You didn't get our wire?"

"No," said Ellen. And she refrained from confessing any fault in this.

"Now that's queer," Galligan commented bluntly. "But first, come into my office."

He led the way and offered her an armchair.

"We wired to Center Falls, but used a little pull. If it missed you there, the message was to be sent after your train."

"Is it something serious about my uncle?"

"No, not serious. He had to leave town. You had said in your night letter you were coming on. So he asked Britt and me to head you off till he got back."

"And when will that be, Mr. Galligan?"

"Oh—soon. In a few days."

"Please don't try to spare me," she begged. "Uncle Joe has been very kind to me, humored me scandalously, I'm afraid, paid my expenses at the Normal School, paid for trips in the summer. And so, when I heard he was in trouble——"

"Did he write you?"

"Yes. But also I saw a newspaper."

"Some dirty rag——" Galligan paused, waved his hand to simulate apology.

"Excuse me, girlie," he said, "but I'm pretty sore at these local papers, all of 'em. And when you know the facts, you'll understand why."

"I should like to know all the facts."

He contrived to indicate his distaste.

"We mustn't pry into your uncle's private affairs. I'm proud to call

Joe Jennings one of my best friends."

"I certainly didn't come here to pry," said Ellen.

"I am very fond of Uncle Joe and have every reason to be devoted to him. His letter didn't tell me he had been arrested. He spoke of an indictment, to prepare me, I suppose, for whatever I might read. He said it would all blow over——"

"Sure it will," Galligan exclaimed. "But why did Uncle Joe leave town so suddenly?"

"Not suddenly, not suddenly at all. He had been planning to go, you see. He couldn't let this thing interfere with business. And being out on bail——"

"Isn't it called—jumping bail?"

Galligan's geniality had begun to ebb away.

"Now, see here, Miss Wade," said he, "you mustn't pick up any funny ideas about this case. Your uncle has been indicted for bribing a Federal officer.

"Maybe that sounds terrible to you in Center Falls. But here it's a big laugh, for we happen to know the man that Joe is supposed to have bribed.

"Besides," he added, "there's a lot of crooked politics in this. A man named Raynold thinks he runs everything around here.

"My partner, Britt, and I and a few others—we can't see it that way. Trying to put something over on us, that's all it is, that's every bit all, believe me.

"Why, I've known your Uncle Joe like a brother for ten years. He's in and out of this office a dozen times a day."

"But doesn't he work here, Mr. Galligan?"

Her simple question seemed to the big man to present the entanglements of a barbed-wire fence.

"Did he tell you he worked for Galligan & Britt, Incorporated?" he queried cautiously.

"Why, no, but I thought, since I always wrote to him here——"

"Oh, why, sure, Joe gets mail here. He'd do as much for me, if our positions were reversed.

"Britt and I are promoters. Did you know that?"

And when Ellen shook her head to convey a polite negative, he pursued:

"Yes, promoters. We dabble in a lot of things, including politics. And often we can throw some business in your uncle's way. He's one of the best confidential investigators."

"Until I read in the newspapers about his arrest," said Ellen, "I had believed he was in the insurance business. And that's what worried me—his turning out to be sort of a detective. He spent a great deal of money always——"

"Some detectives make money," Galligan interrupted.

"But let me say right here, girlie, you have pluck. It was the sporting thing to do, coming on the run when you imagined your Uncle Joe would need his friends to stand by him. It's positively the gamest kind of behavior for a youngster like you."

Ellen blushed. She was flattered; yet she could perceive Galligan's exertion in adroitly changing the subject.

When the sugar coating diminished, she resolved to inquire further about her uncle's confidential activities in behalf of a firm of promoters who included politics.

HOWEVER, they were now interrupted by the switchboard girl.

"Mr. Britt 'd like to see you in his office," she said to Galligan. "I told him about Miss Wade," she continued with a certain significance. "He's just come in."

"I must be going," Ellen said at once.

"No, please! I want you to meet Britt," the big man insisted.

"But I am taking up so much of your time."

"And why not? Your uncle asked Britt and me to look out for you. Now I'll be back directly. Just you wait here and feel at home."

He left her alone for nearly fifteen minutes.

Without moving about or attracting attention, Ellen endeavored to study the activities of this business office.

For she felt sure her uncle's collision with the law was not so trivial as Galligan represented, and that it related to him and his partner.

This was purely her suspicion; she knew of nothing that supported it, and she learned nothing now which confirmed it. The office routine seemed uncommonly placid.

At last Galligan returned, his boisterous mannerisms more pronounced than ever beside the reserve of the younger man who came with him.

"This," he cried, "is Frank Britt, my partner. Frank, this is Joe's plucky young niece, Miss Ellen Wade."

Britt shook hands with no exaggerated heartiness.

Having guessed that Galligan was around forty, Ellen judged Britt at least five years his junior. He was smaller, more alert, more intelligent looking.

He might have been called handsome, but chiefly he gave an impression of calm and great energy—an exceedingly f o r c e f u l personality, rather inclined to be sullen.

It struck her as strange that Galligan, who laughed so loudly and often, should be so attached to a younger partner evidently humorless.

"A game kid, Miss Ellen," the big man was expounding. "She thought her uncle was in bad, and rushed down here to snatch him out of harm's way. Didn't you, huh?"

Britt shrugged and smiled, as if to excuse the other's enormous vulgarity.

"I hoped the telegram might spare you a trip, Miss Wade," said he. "But perhaps it's as well that you came. You want to help your uncle, and there's one way you can."

"Fine and dandy!" Galligan exclaimed.

Ellen tried to share this enthusiasm.

"I want to help, of course," said she.

"Only this morning have I learned that your uncle lived for a time at a boarding house on North Park Avenue. And he left some of his things there, private papers—you know, letters and personal memoranda.

"He appears to have forgotten to get them before taking his train," Britt explained. "Your uncle has enemies; they are eager to ruin him. Anything of his they could obtain might be used against him. They are unscrupulous and desperate."

"Then you wish me to go to this boarding house and try to find whatever it is Uncle Joe left there?"

"It is really much simpler than that," said he. "The house is run by a Mrs. Wolven, who is a good sort and would gladly aid us.

"But we mustn't do anything to seem furtive, on the defensive; nothing to strengthen this trumped-up charge against him.

"If Mrs. Wolven concealed your uncle's things, his papers especially, it would look bad, if they came to her with a search warrant.

"While Tom and I and all our people are so well known as Joe Jennings' friends, any move we'd make

is liable to be construed against him. So you see——"

"It's rather complicated and mysterious, I'm afraid," Ellen said.

"You're afraid?" Britt dared to be scornful.

"Frank, that's only her expression," Galligan urged, though she had not invited him to defend her.

"I am quite ready to try anything which will help my uncle, Mr. Britt," she said. "Perhaps if you will tell me what you want directly, without —without apologies."

"There is nothing to apologize for, Miss Wade. I was merely seeking to show you why you are uniquely suited to undertake this mission."

"Good Lord, Frank! You ain't addressing a parliamentary gathering. The kid's only studying to be a school teacher," Galligan interrupted loudly. "She's not one yet."

He turned to Ellen, chuckling. "It's simply this, girlie. You would tire yourself out going back to Center Falls the same day. Mrs. Wolven runs a homey, decent place. Stay with her tonight, or longer, if you choose.

"We'll naturally stand all expenses, for your uncle's sake. And we'll phone her and say you're coming. She'll be happy to turn your uncle's things over to you.

"It's natural, too. You're his only near relation and his favorite."

"You feel they'll be safer with me in Center Falls?"

"Bring them here as soon as you can," Britt said.

IT was his curtness that annoyed Ellen, but the partners interpreted it otherwise.

"Frank's right, honest he is," Galligan put in. "These enemies of your Uncle Joe's, they're slick and they're determined. Raynold's back of them, of course." Again that name, the millionaire whose sons she had seen with the celebrated Tony Morrison!

"It wouldn't be decent to leave you in charge of Joe's papers, and maybe put his enemies on your trail. They'd just about pester you to death, and enjoy it, too. Whereas Britt and me, we're all used to 'em and their crooked little hypocrite ways."

"I must say, it's hard to imagine Uncle Joe with enemies like that," Ellen observed. "It sounds so awfully melodramatic."

"Maybe it'll be melodramatic when we get 'em some day where we want 'em—eh, Frank?" said Galligan.

"Yes," said Britt, scowling.

"Come along, now," Galligan advised. "I'll take you down and find you a taxi, Miss Ellen.

"Frank, you ring up Mrs. Wolven and tell her she's getting one captivating new guest."

The younger partner nodded.

From a handsome lizard-skin billfold he took out a card and wrote on it in pencil: "Miss Wade to Mrs. Wolven."

He handed it to Ellen and she read also the finely engraved name, "Francis E. C. Britt."

Galligan was now pulsating with an inspiration.

"When you get the things, girlie, you come straight back here. See? For, by then I'm sure we'll have heard from your Uncle Joe. Good news—you'll want to hear all about it."

Britt was starting to telephone when his partner escorted Ellen through the outer office.

And at that moment there entered a very flashy woman whose clothes and character seemed blatantly to blend with the henna of her hair.

"'Lo, Tom," said she.

But she stared at Ellen, with hardly a glance toward Galligan. Her eyes and her mouth, although

cosmetic arts had concentrated there, were exceedingly cruel, thought Ellen.

"Howdy, Lou," said Galligan. And Ellen liked the way in which the big partner seemed to hover around her, sheltering her from Lou's hostile and appraising glare as they went on together into the hall.

"Who's the doll?"

It was Lou's voice, as hard as her countenance. Evidently she had stalked in upon Britt and his phone conversation.

His answer was muffled. But as they awaited an elevator Ellen again heard distinctly, the transom of the office door being open, Lou's strident comment:

"Well, Frank, this ain't a time for playing around with baby faces. . . . Oh, I know you."

Galligan spoke loudly of the excellent elevator service this building afforded.

They went down and out into the street, where he hailed a taxicab. And she was scarcely surprised when he called the driver familiarly by name.

"Bill, run this young lady up to North Park Avenue."

"Yes, sir. North Park.

"Number 1241, Bill. Wait for her there; she'll be coming right back here again on a little errand."

He put two five-dollar notes in Ellen's hand, saying, "That'll sure cover everything till we see you again, Miss Ellen."

And when she started to object, he resumed his inspired chant about their certainly getting in touch with her uncle, Joe Jennings, by the time she returned.

The taxi driver, Bill, proved himself swift and expert in a downtown traffic congestion, that reminded Ellen of the web into which circumstances were thrusting her.

Yet, where to find such another guide to penetrate with her this vague, entangling fabric of intrigue?

If only she might talk to her uncle privately, hear all the truth as he understood it, and only take confidential orders from him.

She resolved she would find out where he had gone, and reach him by long distance telephone regardless of toll charges.

"Here you are, Miss," said Bill, getting out and opening the door of his cab.

"You are going to wait for me——"

"Sorry, Miss," he answered quickly, "but I just remembered I've got another call, a regular customer I don't dare disappoint. But as I drive along I'll send a taxi here to you. The first one I meet. How's that?"

Ellen could only accept the compromise. And she turned to the ordinary looking three-story house of tan brick, No. 1241, without chancing to notice a small runabout loitering in the next block near the corner.

However, the knowing Bill hadn't overlooked it; and he sped from the neighborhood at a pace surpassing even his brisk approach.

Nor did the runabout pursue him, its two occupants seeming satisfied to proceed slowly and pass the door which Ellen had entered.

CHAPTER II

CATSPAW

ELLEN'S ring had been answered by Mrs. Wolven herself, a robust and capable-looking woman, one of those who make excellent asylum attendants and police matrons, but who generally prefer to carry their gifts of authority to more lucrative fields.

Ellen presented Britt's calling

card, but Mrs. Wolven appeared to underrate that form of identification. She welcomed the newcomer pleasantly.

"Come in, Miss Wade. You're his niece, all right; I see a resemblance," said she. "Britt phoned me. It's good of you to take on all this bother for a pack of foolish men who ought to be able to run their own errands."

"Mr. Britt seemed to think you shouldn't give my uncle's things to just anybody."

"Catch me doing it."

"Of course, if there was a search warrant, he said you'd be embarrassed——"

Ellen paused uneasily. It had occurred to her that she might be unnecessarily alarming this kindly matron, whose knowledge of legal matters was no doubt elemental.

"It seems that my uncle has bitter enemies," she concluded.

"Don't you worry," said Mrs. Wolven. "Frank Britt can afford to hire the cleverest lawyers. Joe Jennings will be no scapegoat. It's all mixed up with politics, I guess.

"Britt has more power than is good for him, and old Raynold has millions to buy his way up or down, in whichever direction he thinks he wants to go."

Ellen decided that conversation with Mrs. Wolven might put her in possession of facts she would need if she were to be genuinely helpful to her uncle.

By staying here overnight, as Galligan had suggested, she ought to learn a good deal about this local conflict, in which Britt seemed arrayed against the Raynold boys' father, and the Jennings indictment but an opening skirmish.

When she spoke of it, Mrs. Wolven answered that Britt had said she would stay, for one night at least.

"Will you come upstairs?" she invited. "What about baggage?"

Ellen followed her up the stairs, saying she had checked a small bag at the Terminal.

"This was your uncle's room," said Mrs. Wolven, turning in at the second floor rear.

"You say—was? Don't you expect Uncle Joe here again?"

"Young woman, you're altogether too sharp."

"Excuse me, please. But all of this about my uncle has been a surprise and rather a shock," Ellen explained. "I am trying to find out all I can about him, trying to understand the circumstances of his arrest. I want to get the opinions of his friends and to know about these enemies——"

Mrs. Wolven stood in the doorway of the large rear bedroom, which appeared clean and comfortable and neatly furnished.

"My dear girl," said she, and she rested her hand on Ellen's arm, "you are grateful to your uncle because he has been kind to you.

"But I'm sure he, himself, would be the first to beg you not to mix yourself up in anything of this kind. You can't help him, you see, and you can do great harm, get into trouble yourself, I mean, and worry him terribly. I'm sure your uncle wouldn't want you in it."

"You can't expect me to be so selfish, Mrs. Wolven."

"But this is all so underground," the woman urged. "Can't you see? You'd much better go back to your school and wait there till things are more out in the open. It isn't as though your uncle had been convicted or held without bail."

"Will you answer one question, please?"

"Why, yes; if I can."

"Has Uncle Joe left the city to hide?"

"Jumped his bail? I don't really know. Maybe he has," was the can-

did reply. "He's a fool if he has done it, but then Britt makes people act like that."

"I felt sure," said Ellen, "that Mr. Britt and Mr. Galligan were both deeply involved in this with Uncle Joe."

"You didn't tell them what you thought?"

"No—hardly. But they seemed so concerned."

"You're not a bit dumb, for all your inexperience hereabouts," Mrs. Wolven announced. And then added: "Your uncle might be lucky if he was as shrewd as you seem.

"I warned him, more than once. But no use! And now I'm warning you, Miss Wade.

"Never mind what favor you promised Britt you'd do. I like you, and I want to see you heading out of town on the very next train today."

ELLEN reflected upon her earnest advice. She had herself felt disposed to mistrust both partners. Britt she disliked.

And since he had appeared to rely upon Mrs. Wolven as an ally, the boarding-house keeper clearly had no personal gain in view when she advocated desertion.

"I will go," said Ellen. "But I don't want to antagonize a man as influential as you say Mr. Britt is."

"If Britt thinks he can use you, there's no good in arguing with him. The thing to do is to get out of his reach."

"I shall. But I see no good reason for refusing to take my uncle's things down to their office, as I agreed.

"I can catch a two o'clock train, and you needn't say I'm not staying here tonight."

"But why——"

"If I seem to run away, it might somehow reflect on Uncle Joe—hurt his chances. I don't know what," Ellen said. "But I feel I must complete the errand I undertook."

"It may be you are right. Britt could certainly hold a mean grudge if he felt like it."

She now entered the rear bedroom and pointed out a black hand-bag which rested upon a chair beside three books that were strapped together.

"There's all Britt wanted," said she, "and all your uncle left behind him. He was very irregular, and though he paid me by the month in advance, he often was away for days.

"A week ago he gave up this room. Said he'd be traveling steady for a time. There was no indictment then. He didn't look at all worried, either.

"He told me to go ahead and show the room, though his month's not up till day after tomorrow. Always generous to a fault, your uncle," Mrs. Wolven concluded rather wistfully.

"Generous and jolly and fine," Ellen agreed. "It is sickening to think of him being so misjudged."

"There's only a bundle of sealed envelopes in the hand-bag, which is mine," said Mrs. Wolven.

"Britt told me over the phone to fix you a bundle to carry which would attract no attention, coming back to their office.

"The books were tied together like that with the strap. They are foreign language dictionaries."

Ellen laughed as she picked up the three bulky volumes.

"I had no idea Uncle Joe knew any foreign tongue," said she. And as she tucked the books under her arm and took up the black bag, there sounded through the house a loud, insistent ringing of the front door bell.

"Somebody's impatient," Mrs. Wolven remarked.

"I'll be getting along," said Ellen, "and thank you so much for your kindness."

"WAIT a moment." They were at the top of the stairs, and below them from the rear of the house a colored maid was straggling forward to answer the door.

Presently Ellen could see her admitting two men, who entered truculently, expecting no welcome, enduring no parley with a servant.

One wore a gray felt hat, the other a derby. They glanced up the staircase.

"Police, I'm afraid," Mrs Wolven murmured. "They've seen us. We must talk. Don't dodge or seem scared."

"Mis' Wol'n!" the maid called.

"What is it, Annabelle?" she responded in the firmly affected tone of casual inquiry.

"Two gem'men, ma'am. They ask fo' Mistah Jenning," Annabelle reported with a faintly betraying quaver.

The pair were evidently "gem'men" of an official type that she recognized.

"Tell them Mr. Jennings isn't here any more, and left no forwarding address, Annabelle," Mrs. Wolven hurled back sweetly.

And then she resumed discussing her house with the presumably departing lodger, Miss Wade.

But the detectives were not to be deceived.

"You come on down and tell us, Sadie," said one. He had caught the substance of her oration to Ellen, and continued:

"Bore a hole in that bunk and leave it sink out of sight. We remember you on Hartford Street, when you got raided twice a year."

Mrs. Wolven abruptly ceased addressing Miss Wade with regard to her departure. Indeed, Ellen was too amazed to have shared in any more pretenses.

Was there nothing in this city which might safely be judged by its outward appearance? The offices of Galligan & Britt, Inc. And now Mrs. Wolven—Sadie, once raided twice a year, who had been so considerate and appeared to be preeminently reputable.

"What is it, Boyle?" Mrs. Wolven descended the stairs without visible dismay.

"Joe Jennings seems to have skipped. We heard he'd kept a room here with you," said Detective Boyle, now removing his derby.

"So we came over to have a look around. Probably nothing upstairs can tell us a syllable, but looking it over is what we come to do."

"Very well, boys," said Mrs. Wolven amiably. "Go ahead. Joe's been checked out more than a week, moved everything. And please try to keep this call off the front pages. Everything here is going straight."

"Straight to what?"

"Let's not try to make each other laugh, Boyle," said she. "And let me attend to this guest who's leaving before you go up to snoop in corners."

Obligingly the two plainclothesmen waited at the bottom of the stairs. And Ellen knew she was now expected, for her uncle's sake, to go down and pass them by, as a lodger who departs after a considerable dispute.

"Well, Miss Wade," said Mrs. Wolven when Ellen appeared on the stairs, carrying the books and the bag, "we mustn't hold any resentment. You didn't like my house. I'm sorry. For I liked you very much."

"Thank you," said Ellen, playing up. "I like you personally. And

I'd rather not continue our argument."

She tried to glance down naturally. The two detectives were watching her, not without masculine approval of her youth and grace. And now her ordeal was at its climax, the stairs left behind, the front door scarcely two yards off.

"One moment, Miss," said Boyle.

"Yes?"

Ellen turned to him affably, but she knew she had disclosed a perceptible dread.

"Just leaving, eh?" said Boyle, and then, "Sadie, why is she quitting, did you say?"

"Miss Wade didn't like her room," Mrs. Wolven explained, and was unwise enough to start elaborating the falsehood. "Our disagreement wasn't so unfriendly, but—"

"Why not blow them bubbles under water?"

"Your comedy again, Boyle."

"Maybe. But Ed and I seen this girl get out of a taxi and come in here, not ten minutes ago," said Boyle.

"And why not? Miss Wade was out looking for a new room," answered Mrs. Wolven, almost too glibly.

The detectives ignored her, making it plain that their interest centered now upon Ellen.

"Let's see the books, Miss," said Boyle.

And Ellen helplessly yielded.

"Now take it easy, Boyle," Mrs. Wolven exclaimed. "Miss Wade has some very influential friends."

"Sure she has." He was unstrapping the books.

"If you annoy her, they'll know how to resent it."

"Trying to threaten an officer, Sadie?"

"Miss Wade has been here in my care—"

"Dismount, Sadie, dismount," Boyle jeered. "You never seen her before today. And she didn't know this house from next-door when she rolled up in the taxi.

"The taxi driver beat it like he had a guilty conscience. He'd seen Ed and I down the street, waiting.

"This girl's not in your care, Sadie, She's years away yet from any of your postgraduate courses."

He opened one of the books and fluttered the leaves. Two banknotes fell to the floor, and when Ed recovered them, Ellen saw they were one thousand dollar bills.

"Dictionary in wop lingo," said Boyle. "Been used for making codes and for safe deposit. Jennings' stuff, Sadie. No wonder your guest didn't like her room."

"I have a right to take my uncle's things," Ellen ventured. "I didn't know he kept money in the books."

"Your uncle, eh? Well, that makes it bigger and better, and a lot clearer."

Boyle gestured to his partner, saying: "Have a look in the handbag. She hadn't it with her when she come in."

Ed took the bag from Ellen, deftly snapped it open and peered in. "A bunch of sealed envelopes and some keys, Jim," said he.

"Better leave 'em for the chief to examine as is," Boyle observed.

"I'm very sorry," Ellen said, "if these things appear suspicious to you. I suppose you've a right to take them since Uncle Joe has been accused—accused——"

"Too bad, Miss. A nice kid like you shouldn't have got messed up with any of this," Boyle said.

"Just what I was telling her when you rang." Mrs. Wolven had re-

treated into the role of sympathetic bystander.

"The chief may want to hear all about that, Sadie."

"You know where to find me."

"Sure," said Boyle.

"I'm very sorry," Ellen repeated. "Can I go now, since you have the things—all there was?"

"Go? With us, sure," Ed answered.

Ellen turned to appeal to Boyle, the more genial.

"We'll have to take you to headquarters, Miss," said he. "My chief will want to know all about you."

"But, really, I've not done anything wrong."

"Such innocence is pitiful," Ed commented. "You were making off with evidence, sister. Didn't nobody stop to explain it to you?"

CHAPTER III

THE FAT AND THE FIRE

DURING the next four hours, having arrived at the gray and grimly impressive edifice which was police headquarters, Ellen was questioned by a captain of detectives, by a deputy chief inspector, by an assistant prosecuting attorney and an engaging interrogator who represented the Federal Department of Justice.

Over and over again she explained how she had left the Normal School at Center Falls and come to the city that morning, and why.

She showed the letter from her uncle in which he warned her of his being indicted, but made light of it.

And she had with her, also, the clipping from the newspaper wherein she had first read of his arrest. That she had wired him yesterday of her intention was verified through the telegraph company.

None of her questioners seemed disposed to doubt her story or her motives in any particular.

But each of them went over it all in such painstaking detail that her commonplace trip to town became intolerably tedious; as though, like a Columbus, she had planned and preached the journey for years and devastated a skeptic world by accomplishing it.

Her call upon Galligan and Britt, every emotion while in their office, every syllable of her discourse with the partners was acknowledged to be insignificant.

Ellen repeated herself until she marveled that busy men and public officials could be so insulated against boredom. For, having recovered from her alarm, she was twenty and easily bored herself by a process which amounted to no more than indulging tiresome elders. At least, that is how it struck her.

"That's really all, every bit I know or heard," she protested at last. "Please don't forget that I only arrived here this morning. I haven't had much time for finding out things that would interest you."

The Federal detective, perhaps detecting sarcasm, laughed good-humoredly. "In spite of your handicap, Miss Wade," said he, "you'll be an important witness."

"I should think you would rather question Mr. Galligan or Mr. Britt," she suggested.

"Their turns will come," said Hargrave, the young assistant prosecutor. "But you must be hungry," he added. "You had no lunch."

"I was too nervous to think of eating," Ellen told them. "But now, if you are through with me, I guess I had better go and get something."

The men seemed embarrassed and hastened to order for her.

When a waiter from a nearby restaurant was escorted in by a policeman, Ellen found that his tray offered her a delicious meal.

But while she ate, it became clear to her that she was not yet free. It even appeared that her disposal and protection was deemed an official problem of major importance.

"You won't be expected to testify against your uncle," Hargrave explained. "You may even help his case if it comes to trial.

"Britt is the man we are after, and you tie him in very nicely. He sent you to Mrs. Wolven to get Jennings' papers and books. Some of the papers I'd swear your uncle never saw.

"And, by the way, there were more than twenty thousand dollars in large bills tucked away between the leaves of those three dictionaries, money which Britt intended Jennings to use in further bribery of men Britt fears.

"It would be unsafe for you in this city," he continued, "while we are completing our case against Britt and his ring.

"Technically, you are being detained as a material witness. We believe your story and do not charge you as an accessory.

"To return to your school you will have to be released under bond, in the custody of a responsible person.

"I, personally, would prefer that you remain hidden away and well guarded till we require your testimony before the Grand Jury."

"It all sounds pretty awful for me," Ellen said.

The others agreed that her prospect was unpleasant.

"Perhaps we can find a better way," Hargrave exclaimed. "I'll take it up with my chief about a bondsman and your future safekeeping."

THEREAFTER Ellen waited alone in the private office of the captain of detectives.

He had commended her to the polite care of a detective-sergeant, Jordan, but this genial officer was presently excited by a telephone call about a murder. He excused himself and went out.

At 4:30 Ellen sat forlornly alone, all but imprisoned, trying vainly to pass the time with police bulletins, most of which offered rewards for criminals missing and wanted.

She had heard nothing from Hargrave. Probably he hadn't been able to reach his chief, the prosecuting attorney. But now a police lieutenant in uniform came into the office and called her by name.

"Miss Wade?"

"Your bondsman is here. You are at liberty to go," he said.

A swarthy young man followed him.

"This is Mr. Kargill," the lieutenant explaned. "He says you don't know him. But friends have asked him to look out for you. He's attended to everything."

Abruptly the lieutenant turned and left her alone with Kargill, whose smile was rather attractive, but whose raiment and jewelry Ellen thought offensively sporty.

"Miss Wade, I am your uncle's attorney," said he.

"Uncle Joe sent you?"

Kargill paused, obviously deciding between the plain truth or a more palatable falsehood.

"Your uncle hasn't heard of your unfortunate detention," he answered. "As you know, he is out of the city today.

"But when I learned of your plight, little girl, I knew what Joe Jennings would want me to do at once. And I've done it. Let's be getting out of here."

He seemed unduly urgent. "But

Mr. Hargrave said he would—" Ellen began.

"No doubt. Jack Hargrave's a great ladies' man," Kargill interrupted gaily. "But your uncle wouldn't wish you to be obligated to the very men who are persecuting him."

"Persecuting?"

"Substantially that. We know Joe Jennings is straight as they come. If he wants to help out a pal who's in bad luck, is it bribery just because that pal happens to have a Federal job?

"Moreover," continued Kargill, "the indictment is a Federal indictment. And why, then, are the local police butting in, if it isn't plain persecution.

"A certain faction, Miss Wade, is out to get your uncle and some of his friends. The idea of arresting a nice girl like you, and for what?

"Wait till I fix it for you to be interviewed by a bunch of reporters. We'll show them whether it is persecution or not."

"Oh, dear—must it be in the papers?" Ellen lamented. "Really, I was treated very politely."

"Come along. I want to hear all about it," said the attorney.

No officer attempted to interfere as he guided her from the great gray building.

Kargill was conspicuously gallant as an escort. He hailed a taxi and helped her into it with a flourish.

"My office," he told the driver, who touched his cap and said: "Yes, sir."

Ellen wondered if the taxi drivers were personally acquainted with all their customers. She recalled Galligan's familiarity with the expert Bill, who conducted her to Mrs. Wolven's.

But now Kargill was himself attempting the familiar. He held her hand.

"Well, that's that!" he cried. "And here we go forth into a pleasanter world. They don't hold all the cards, you see.

"It seemed to me simpler to bail you than use a writ of habeas corpus. That meant a hearing, and our side's not ready yet to line up against 'em in court."

"Please——" said Ellen, withdrawing her hand.

"You're tired, and no wonder. Hungry, too, I'll bet. And you can take it up with the Bar Association if Jeff Kargill ever lets a pretty client starve."

He was disappointed when he heard of her belated but considerable luncheon, and he said so, venturing to suggest that a cocktail would give her an appetite when it became his privilege to provide her dinner.

LACK of experience Ellen knew to be her dangerous deficiency. But inexperience is seldom vulnerable unless an affliction in common with lack of intelligence.

And Ellen had no such deadly lack; she was shrewd and observant, tactful but wary.

She knew, for example, that a lawyer, no matter how gracious, who adorned himself with a cravat and waistcoat like Kargill's was not the same sort of lawyer as Hargrave, whose spectacles had even been rimless.

And, when the taxi Kargill had chosen in front of police headquarters stopped before a red brick building plainly advertised as the "Hotel Michigan," she not only recognized it as a peculiar location for a law office, but also saw it was no very distinguished site for a city hotel.

"And here we are," said her bland companion.

"Your office?"

"Your troubles have made you unusually keen, my dear girl," he complimented. "I am fortunate enough to own a good share of this glorified inn, so naturally one of my offices is here. And there is an A-1 chef here, too."

"Really, I'm not at all hungry," Ellen persisted.

"Then we'll just talk. You can't imagine how glad I am to know good old Joe's niece," said Kargill. "He's often talked about you. And I wondered how a man could brag so wildly about a relative. Whereas, I now perceive his weakness was understatement.

He helped her from the cab and handed a bill to its chauffeur. Very reluctantly she went with him into the lobby of the hotel.

"I have a suite reserved for you here," he said. "Perhaps we may as well go up——"

"Certainly not!" Ellen had just resolved to save time and spare his possible anticipations by being as blunt as he was suave.

The lobby seemed designed to display her. And the approval of a dozen loungers there had a leering, X-ray quality natural to such a place and such men, but quite infuriating to her.

These guests of the Hotel Michigan would have been despised as "racing men"; though any one of them, if devoted exclusively to anything so decent as the thoroughbred racehorse, might have been too harmless for the hotel's standard.

"Into my office, then," Kargill was inviting.

"To be frank with you," said Ellen, "I don't like this place and I have no intention of remaining here. You may think me crazy if you like, but I preferred being among those police officers."

"What is your wish?" He had flushed darkly, and Ellen hoped she had been rude enough to disgust him.

"I can catch the last train back home," said she, "if I start for the Terminal immediately. The 5:28."

"As your bondsman—" he started to argue.

"My alternative is going back to police headquarters. I was beginning to feel safe there."

"You don't feel safe with me? But what have I done?" Kargill exclaimed.

"You have meant to be kind, I know," said Ellen. "Please allow me to go back to Center Falls. It is in this state, you know, so I won't be out of reach if the police here want me, or you hear from my uncle.

"I'll stay there, I promise, and return whenever I'm wanted in court. Please," she urged, "put me in a taxi and send me to the Terminal. I have to get a bag I left checked there and I've barely fifteen minutes."

"Very well, Miss Wade," he agreed. When she tried to thank him, he became absurdly formal. A taxi was conveniently waiting before the hotel.

He bowed her into it, hat in hand. He smiled again.

"Good-by, good luck," he said. "You'll hear from me."

And to the driver, "Terminal, as fast as you can. The young lady is catching the 5:28."

"Yes, sir."

Ellen vaguely recognized that voice. The taxicab was gathering speed. She looked back, to see Kargill re-entering the Hotel Michigan of obnoxious population. And then she called out: "Please do hurry," hoping that the driver would turn his head, which he did.

It was Bill who had driven her to Mrs. Wolven's.

He grinned and nodded cheerfully.

"You're O. K. now, Miss," he said. "But it wasn't no cinch, putting one over on that bird. He's slick. I followed you from headquarters, and waited—just like your uncle, Mr. Jennings, said I should do."

"You've seen my uncle?"

"I'm taking you right to where he is, Miss."

The taxi turned a corner and Bill increased its speed. The Terminal and the 5:28 were abandoned.

"But wait, please." Ellen sought a more explicit and convincing explanation. "Where are you taking me?" she demanded.

"Soon," Bill shouted over his shoulder, as if answering her inquiry about their arrival at a known address. And the taxi sped on toward the unrevealed destination.

Ellen felt unable to cope with plotters so clever that they admitted they were plotting.

She realized, too, that the name of the relative she had hoped to aid was being used as a password to inveigle her from one misadventure to the next.

She recalled that young Hargrave, and the other responsible officials interviewing her at police headquarters, were agreed as to her importance as a witness for the prosecution of Messrs. Britt and Galligan; and they had not ignored the necessity of guarding her well from those who would want to stifle her testimony.

Bill was now turning into a broad thoroughfare, and she knew the city well enough to recognize it as South Maxwell Street. At least twenty minutes' drive from the Terminal, and all hope of returning to Center Falls that night vanished away!

She rapped on the glass panel at Bill's back, and he turned for a moment and gestured reassuringly.

The traffiic was heavier now; yet he seemed inspired to reject its hindrances, and so maintained a swift pace miraculous and terrifying.

ONCE again Ellen knocked on the glass, but he did not respond. With fear growing at every turn of the wheels, she cast about her for any means of checking this unwelcome flight.

She first lowered the window panel of the door on her right. She would cry out for help if passing close to any policeman on the curb.

And then, in frantic haste, she turned to attack the door on her left, from which side she might appeal to a traffic officer in the center of the street as they whirled along.

A whistle sounded shrilly. Bill had to apply his brakes, even as he signaled an intention of turning the corner.

At least fifty feet away was the traffic officer, who motioned him to proceed, and Ellen hesitated to begin such a commotion as would carry that distance.

She discovered at the left, and a little behind her vehicle of mad dispatch, a smart roadster of expensive make.

There were three young men in the waiting roadster, and she recognized them—the two Raynolds and Tony Morrison, who had been momentarily close beside her in the Terminal that morning.

On desperate impulse she waved to these three, trusting that it might appear more distressed than flirtatious.

The younger Raynold was perched precariously above his brother, who was driving, and the football star sat half-turned around in keeping a watchful eye on him whose place was thus abnormally chosen.

And when the younger Raynold

saw Ellen wave, his response was convulsive, Morrison's athletic grip fortunately offsetting the youth's desire to fly to her aid through space.

Bill now had his fleeing cab on its way again and was swinging to the right, away from the Raynold roadster, rounding the corner into Carleton Street and a new stream of traffic that the whistle had started.

"Catch that taxi, Chuck!" the younger brother yelled. "See the girl? Wow, beauty and adventure!"

Charles Raynold looked to Morrison for a decision.

"Better have a look, I guess, Chuck," said the grinning oracle. "She did wave and is fair to see. But it's queer, somehow. Look at that taxi going away!"

With one action Chuck was signaling the traffic officer and starting his turn, permission taken for granted, as was the Raynold way about town.

Ellen's potential kidnapper had a fair start, and the cross-street traffic was a hazard for Raynold speeding.

Yet taxicabs are not built to compete with imported roadsters, and in five blocks the two Raynolds and Tony Morrison drew up near enough once more to see that the pretty girl still beckoned, and was anxiously urging them on.

Then the roadster leaped forward and came up beside Bill with a roar.

Attracting police attention, Chuck Raynold reasoned, might be helpful, since Ellen now clearly presented herself as a victim and not a coquette.

"Oh, make him stop, please," she called as the roadster reached its mark like a well-aimed projectile. "I want to get out. I don't know where he is driving me."

"Where he was driving you, dear lady," Archie Raynold corrected jubilantly.

"Taxi, pull into the curb." He produced the harsh tone of a motorcycle cop.

"Pull in, taxi!" Tony Morrison shouted in such commanding fury that Bill then and there ceased planing a reckless spurt, and began to consider how he might escape with an empty cab.

Chuck had driven the roadster ahead to cut him off. And Ellen gratefully listened to the creaking and groaning as Bill's brakes effected the sudden termination of her ride.

Archie won the race to the taxi door and assisted Ellen in spite of more stalwart competitors.

"What was your big idea?" Chuck menaced the uneasy Bill.

"She can explain," he mumbled. "Ask her."

The three young rescuers surrounded Ellen. Bill had been charged to convey her to a certain remote address. Well, there was no more use trying. He put on his power and abruptly rolled away.

The Raynolds were eager to repeat his capture.

"Climb in, all," yelled Archie. "That crook fancies he can make a getaway. Chuck, to the wheel. Clear for action!"

"Oh, please let him go," Ellen begged. "I never want to see him again."

CHAPTER IV

HAND AND GLOVE

THE thunderous final charge of the roadster in overhauling Bill's taxi had caused a crowd to gather, an inquiring and increasing crowd, that stayed after Bill was out of sight, and that included a police sergeant and three patrolmen.

"Asking for a ticket, boys?" said the sergeant.

He and his men seemed to know the Raynolds; their burst of speed in downtown traffic was evidently no uncommon display.

"This young lady," Archie exclaimed, drawing all possible attention upon her, "she was being kidnapped in that taxi, Sergeant. We did our duty."

"What taxi?"

"Here is the license number," said Tony Morrison. He wrote on an envelope and handed it to the sergeant.

"Good old quick thinking, Tony," Chuck applauded.

"Will you make a charge, Miss?"

"I am Ellen Wade," she told the sergeant. And she added a sketchy account of her wishing to reach the Terminal to catch the 5:28 back to Center Falls, of her taxi driver's peculiar sense of direction and speed.

"He wouldn't stop when I called out. He appeared to think he was doing me a favor. After a time when I grew frightened, I waved to these gentlemen to help me," she explained.

"Lucky thing we were on hand," said Tony.

"Sure thing," the sergeant observed dryly. "Miss Wade only passed about twenty traffic posts between here and anywhere she started from."

"But the traffic officers seem so busy," Ellen replied. The others laughed at her naïve excuse for choosing civilian rescuers. She hoped it would divert the sergeant from further questioning. But no——

"Where did you start from?" he asked.

"I had been to see my uncle's lawyer," said she, hoping this might be the whole truth. "The taxi was standing in front of some hotel. I was in a hurry to get to the Terminal——"

"Some hophead, your driver. We'll amputate his license for him," he said. "You don't remember the name of the hotel? What street?"

"It was the Hotel Michigan, I think."

The Raynold brothers and the policeman showed that the name she mentioned was a startling bit of new evidence.

"Whatever took you over there?" the sergeant queried. "You could find a lot of worse things than crazy taxi men, believe me."

"Who runs the Michigan these days?" Archie asked.

"Son, Britt runs it, of course. It's supposed to be owned by Galligan and Kargill."

"Not old Kargill?"

"No, Jeff—the old man's nephew."

"Say," Tony Morrison interrupted, "we can't keep Miss Wade standing here, Arch, while you gossip with the authorities."

Both of the Raynolds were instantly apologetic.

The sergeant advised that Ellen go to a police station and lodge a formal complaint.

But, to her relief, he did not remember to inquire the name of her uncle's lawyer, or the name of her uncle. Her address, the Normal School, seemed to him a complete reference, as, indeed, it was.

"We'll not let Miss Wade bother," Archie put in. "One of dad's lawyers can attend to the complaint tomorrow."

"All we ask, sergeant," said Chuck, "is that you vouch for us to the young lady."

"Not a chance, though you're tamer together, I suppose. And who is your alert and sane looking friend?"

"Anthony Morrison, halfback.

Sergeant McClure." Archie took charge of the belated introduction.

"So—Morrison! And how's the rib?"

"Bandaged and bothersome," Tony answered.

"I guess then you are the safe chaperon," said the genial McClure.

"Miss Wade, good luck to you," he added. "You boys will see she gets her train—the next one?"

"Thank you, Sergeant," said Chuck. "The department may depend upon us."

Ellen was invited to take her place beside him. Archie resigned himself to the rumble, now that he had Tony as a distinguished fellow exile.

"FORGIVE my boastful companions, Miss Wade," said the football star. "They had to demonstrate their pull with the police. Possibly you have missed another train."

"I'm afraid——" Ellen began, but Archie Raynold interrupted.

"You can't miss any train so much as we'll miss you after you have taken a train," said he.

"Tony, hold the incoherent kid. We're starting," Chuck exclaimed. The splended car gathered speed. It left a cloud of comment behind.

Funny thing," McClure remarked to a patrolman. "I hear old Raynold hasn't a spark of humor inside him. The boys must have inherited from a jolly sort of mother."

"My Gawd, some just flop into luck," breathed a girl at the curb.

For Ellen had settled luxuriously beside Chuck Raynold and was plainly prepared to enjoy to the utmost what was, though no observer might guess it, the first enjoyable episode of her day.

"Miss Wade, I wanted you to miss trains," Archie boldly insisted. "I plotted it, desperately."

"Hit him, Tony," Chuck recommended.

"He can't, his ribs are in quarantine," the younger brother retorted. "Besides, you two benefit from my plotting.

"Would I waste badinage, persiflage and even circumlocution on a mere police sergeant—I, who am courted by captains and precinct inspectors?"

"Taken to court, you mean."

"My object was to have Miss Wade wait till an after-dinner train," Archie pursued. "This, in short, is an after-dinner speech, imploring our heroine to take a train after she has had dinner with us."

"Say, Tony, rushing through the open air has given him an idea," Chuck said. "Dinner is his motion, and unanimously carried."

"Dinner is a meal, unanimously ordered, specially prepared, and separately swallowed——"

"Arch, shut up!" Tony leaned over to entreat Ellen's attention. "Can you stay and have dinner with us? How about the train schedule, will it matter if you leave a bit later?" he asked.

"The truth is," said she, "that the 5:28 which I missed is the last through train to stop at Center Falls tonight."

In silence the three pondered her new predicament.

"I don't want to seem, well, to seem inquisitive or presuming," Tony Morrison said at last, "but is there any one who may have hired that taxi driver to make you miss the 5:28, Miss Wade?"

"Yes," she answered. "It is rather hard to explain——"

"Then, please don't," they urged.

"But I must. I really need friends and advice. And at the same time, I ought to tell you about myself before we go any further.

"There is only one place you real-

ly should take me and that is back to police headquarters or, perhaps, to jail."

Their consternation was not entirely disguised from her. She wondered if she had the right to enlist their aid, as she surely would. In view of her uncle's position——

"Are you a student at jail?" Archie's pun provoked neither laughter nor rebuke, but it did help her to resume the narrative of her experience, since arriving to help her uncle.

"Chuck, slow up, pull in to the curb. We want to hear all about this," Tony said.

The roadster was halted in a side street.

"Anybody likely to be following you?" Chuck inquired.

"I don't know. I hardly think so," Ellen said. "I am released under bond. And I promised to return to Center Falls tonight."

"Gee, a real adventuress!"

"Arch, shut up!" Tony commanded. "Please go on," he said to Ellen. "We want to find out how we can help you."

AND so she told them of everything up to her second encounter with Bill and his attempt to carry her off in his taxicab, omitting no part of her conversations with Britt or Galligan, with Mrs. Wolven or Kargill, and not even sparing herself the description of her humiliating arrest.

"You can't blame detectives for believing the worst," Chuck said. "Their eyes are all they ever have to see with.

"But it certainly is great that we met you, Miss Wade. After dinner we'll arrange it so that you can talk to dad.

"He will know what you ought to do and he'll look out for your uncle, too. You want that, don't you?"

"Yes. My own trouble is slight compared to his. And I feel sure he is the tool of these other men."

"Of Britt," Archie declared. "Long ago I remember hearing of him. It gave me a great thrill. One of dad's lawyers said Frank Britt had more real power at twenty-five than most men get at fifty.

"Then dad said that the Britts would always have power while there was only one honest man born every minute.

"The lawyer said Britt would be the big political boss of this town in a few years, if he wasn't hung.

"And dad said, in that sharp way of his, 'We had better begin to buy rope.'"

"You were hiding and listening," Chuck charged.

"I certainly was. Why not? It helped me to understand and appreciate my own father. 'We had better begin to buy rope.' I knew then," said Archie, "that Britt, power or no power, was in for a tough trip on the old toboggan."

"It's true, Miss Wade," Tony said, "that Mr. Raynold will be able to protect you. He has enormous influence. And you're not the kind of girl to be mixed up in any such row."

"We'll have dinner," Chuck added, "and you will become our guest. Dad will want you on hand, but safe, you see, and even Britt's people wouldn't dare annoy you in our house. We came to town on an errand of mercy——"

"Forget it!" said Tony.

"We wanted a specialist to see if there is any quicker way of patching up a great halfback's rib," Chuck explained.

"We have to go back to college tomorrow, but you will be safe here till the case is cleared up, much safer even than at school."

"I doubt if I'll return to college

tomorrow," said Archie. "Miss Wade can't be bored to death just because she's in some danger and involved in an underworld war."

This point the brothers disputed vehemently, and Ellen wondered how many of her friends would find it a desolate prospect, being the house guest of the multimillionaire Raynold, in his great city mansion.

"You think you'll claim Miss Wade as your find," Chuck argued, "and make a special hit with dad because he is keen to knock out Britt and his gang. You'll borrow on your next year's allowance, I suppose?"

"You've heard my beastly brother's notion of libel," said the alert Archie. "For reward you must let me call you Ellen."

"*Miss* Ellen's the limit for you," Tony returned.

"This comes from his taking a course in the Victorian novel," Archie told her. "I admire you and I am moved by your courage. If you will call me your favorite vegetable, I'll call you anything you like up to six syllables and I won't mind how familiar——"

Tony grabbed him and said, "What about dinner?"

"I'm too tough, I warn you," Archie cried.

"Yorke's?" said Chuck, starting the car. "Or where?"

"It must be a quiet place, you know," Tony said. "You two mighty spenders are better known among the cabarets than the mayor, and on Miss Ellen's account——"

"Let's go out to the Castle and have a private dining-room," Chuck proposed.

"We can hide away there all right, have a perfectly corking meal, and get back in time to interview dad when he comes home from some fool banquet he said he had to go to. Any other suggestions?"

Ellen and Tony Morrison had none, while Archie had so many that Chuck swung the roadster around and indicated that he had decided in favor of himself.

"Gee, Chuck, why not the morticians' museum? Nothing ever happens at the Castle nowadays, except some jealous spouse gathering divorce particulars," the younger Raynold protested in vain.

THEY were now upon a broad avenue of suburban aspect, and presently it changed to a country road and the speeding roadster had left the city behind.

Chuck turned in along a fine driveway and stopped before a large gray house, located amid acres of lawn.

The Castle—and apparently unoccupied. Yet from nowhere a uniformed man appeared and saluted, touching his braided cap.

"Hello there, Jim Jam," called out the Raynolds. "How are things here with you?"

"Most quiet so far," said the man, evidently flattered, "but now that you gentlemen have come——"

"We want it to stay quiet," said Chuck. "Tell Andre to come out here. I have a special order."

The doorman hurried off and returned in a moment with a large, swarthy man in evening dress. His greeting proved the value of the Raynold patronage.

Ellen wondered how quickly he would comply if asked to redecorate the whole establishment.

Chuck, however, was contriving to engage a private room without hinting at anything furtive.

The four then climbed out of the roadster, Tony outflanking both brothers and practically lifting Ellen from the front seat.

Instructed by Chuck about the disposal of the car the doorman, Jim almost stealthily took his place at

the wheel and drove around the house and out of sight.

Andre, of sartorial splendor, held open a heavy door, guided them through a dimly-lit vestibule, through another doorway, and into a bright and spacious hall, admitting a good deal of clatter and mild hilarity from the rooms leading off at the right and left.

"Andre pretends to have heard of the Amendment, so he can double his cover charge," Chuck ironically explained to Ellen. "Hicks will pay for mystery. But I've seen a half-dozen police and prohibition sleuths duck in here during one small evening. Everybody knows the refined and elegant Castle."

Somewhere a jazz band was starting to play. Ellen loved dancing; but Andre was leading the way upstairs.

None listened to the band more regretfully than she, and she suddenly hated Britt and the others for condemning her to this absurd if necessary seclusion.

Chuck commenced ordering a superb dinner as soon as they came into the cozy private room, with its unostentatious furnishings and the log fire that picturesquely proclaimed the autumn chill they had scarcely noticed on the way.

Tony took Ellen's coat and hat.

Archie placed an armchair for her.

"I'm really not cold," said she, resisting the fire's stupefying warmth, "nor dressed for this occasion."

"Our grandeur must embarrass you," Tony chuckled, plucking at the sweater he wore beneath his coat.

The Raynolds, she noted, were in knickers. And her frock was the best of its kind that she possessed. No need then to disparage herself or play the hypocrite. She looked as well as they; and all three obviously admired her there in the rosy firelight.

"Cocktails first," Chuck said. "Miss Ellen?"

"No, thank you." She tried to apologize, as one must in an age when the forbidden is cherished on principle. Her appetite, she warned him, needed no improving.

"Do you heaps of good, a cocktail," Archie urged.

"Fathead!" Tony interposed.

"I'm no killjoy, I hope," said Ellen. "But after that swift ride in the keen air, and then this sudden warmth——"

"Of course. My error, really," Chuck agreed. "We'll have wine with the dinner."

Tony Morrison tried to frown on this, too; but Ellen accepted, perhaps resenting his chosen rôle of guardian.

"If we leave the door open we can hear the band," Archie said. "Let's slide this table over, Chuck. We'll have dancing after all, b' gosh."

Again Tony pronounced a censorial veto.

"Now just because you've got fallen ribs——"

"Arch, you're sickening," retorted the athlete. "Hasn't Miss Ellen honored us with her confidence? After such a day as she's been through, she needs to rest."

"I hoped to take her mind off the cruel world," Archie protested. "While we await the preparation of the feast, how shall we occupy ourselves correctly, my good man? Speak, oh, sage! May our mouths water?"

"Never let anybody mistake you for a well-bred adult," Chuck said caustically.

THE Raynolds were still abusing each other with cheerful exaggerations, when the dinner Chuck had

ordered like an epicure was served, under Andre's personal supervision.

With the champagne there had to be toasts: to Ellen, to her future free of perils, to their further friendship, to Tony's rib, to the athletic prowess of the university they honored with more loyalty than scholarship, to the Normal School and the lucky children Ellen might teach if she became a teacher.

Tony hardly tasted his wine, adhering to training rules, despite temporary absence from the team.

And Ellen drank hers sparingly, even while acknowledging the excellence of the beverage.

Both brothers indulged themselves exceedingly, she thought, yet appeared to be used to it. There had been so much mirth in them before the meal, she could not be sure of any note of intoxication now sustained by their boisterous good humor.

"Now dessert," said Archie. "Then we'll dance the demi-tasse. Coffee is so injurious. It prolongs life."

"Don't you mean exactly the opposite?" Ellen asked.

"Not in the least. Coffee prolongs life by prolonging consciousness. I mean, it keeps you awake."

Very steadily he went to the door, opening it so that the dance music might be heard from the main restaurant below.

In the hall, close by, stood a waiter; but not their waiter. A bald, bland, fat man, who appeared to know both brothers well, he confronted Archie with a trace of insolence.

"What do you want?" Tony sprang up, and Chuck attempted to, moving heavily.

Archie's truculence also revealed to Ellen the diminishing Raynold sobriety.

"What do you want?" Tony repeated. "What's your idea?"

"Nothing—not anything, sir." The waiter vanished.

But the brothers were aroused, and Archie went out to call for the attentive Andre, who appeared very promptly, and, to Ellen, seemed much more agitated than the episode could possibly warrent.

Finally, brushing past the younger brother's irritable clamor, he came to the table where Ellen sat, with Tony standing beside her.

"I hesitated to disturb you, Miss Wade," said he. "You are Miss Ellen Wade, aren't you?"

His English was faultless for all of a carefully cultivated alien manner and appearance.

"There are two gentlemen below, wishing to speak to you," he added. "Mr. Jennings and Mr. Kargill."

"My uncle!" Ellen grew instantly skeptical.

Archie breathed abuse till Tony checked him. Andre, too, appeared in no mood now for callow fulminations.

"Pretty thick of you," Chuck observed with a painful precision. "Where were your wits, Andre—admitting you had ever seen any such young lady as they described?"

"I lied and lied. They are positive."

"They tipped you——"

"I am not to be bought so cheaply, Mr. Raynold. But as Miss Wade seemed a nice young lady and this is a wholly presentable party——"

"Why, it's too respectable for your old dump, you polished idiot!" Archie exclaimed.

"I wished merely to spare you any misunderstanding," the polished one said to Ellen, "any future discomfort because of this dinner—the private room—misinterpreted."

"I see," said Ellen, "and thank you."

To Tony she said: "They know I'm here, but it can hardly be my

Uncle Joe. I must know who it is. Please wait for me here."

She meant him to subdue the turbulent brothers. But leaving that task to Andre, Tony followed after her as she went to the top of the staircase. Cautiously she glanced down.

"It's Mr. Kargill," she whispered, turning back to her anxious escort. "And, oh, I did promise him to go straight back to school. It was he who arranged my bond."

"Anybody else with him?" Tony queried softly.

Ellen had to venture down two steps to spy upon the lawyer's companions.

Kargill stood talking to a man and a woman in evening dress, the woman's gown, as viewed from directly above, giving the impression that she had stripped to the waist.

She seemed familiar, and the man much more so. He raised his hand, emphatically gesturing, and now Ellen heard his voice:

"Get that, Jeff! It's up to you!" he snapped.

The man was Britt. And the woman must be that coarse Lou she had seen invading the office, as she left it with Galligan.

Even as Ellen turned to retreat, she knew all three were glancing up and must see her. Tony was warned by her stricken look, and he gripped her arm, fearing she'd faint.

Together they hastened back to the private dining-room, past Andre, who didn't venture to detain them, and so burst in upon the fuming, tipsy brothers.

"It's Britt!"

Ellen herself flung the door shut in Andre's face and backed against it. "I'm afraid I've got you boys into serious trouble," she said, sagging weakly now in spite of Tony's firm grasp.

"Some dirty work," Chuck Raynold muttered.

"We must get her away from here at once," said Tony. "Pull yourselves together."

"Fight our way out," Chuck exclaimed, grabbing up a chair but giving small promise of accurate aim with it.

"You mustn't get into a fight," Ellen said to Tony. "You're injured as it is." Yet she was glad to have him beside her, glad she had told them all of the truth.

The menacing significance of Frank Britt's pursuit and presence at the Castle needed no added explanation.

"Fight our way out," Chuck insisted.

"Ready!"

But Archie Raynold had rallied his wits and, turning eagerly, he opened the window.

(*To be concluded.*)

Shanghai Deviltry

By ALEXANDER WILLIAMS

OLD TIMER stretched. His spare jaw cracked with the vigor of his yawn and the corded muscles stood out on his lean arms.

Carefully he hoisted one long leg after the other, settled his heels on the mantel-shelf and wriggled his prehensible big toes in carefree and happy fashion through the holes in his socks.

"Folks sure are taking a lot of bother with the heathen Chinee these days," he mused. "I never thought I'd live to see the day when a revolution in the Flowery Kingdom would be front page news. Seems like the world gets more ladylike and efeet every day.

"Now, Shanghai, for instance: Here it is all filled up with foreign troops and alarums and excursions, and I bet a dollar, Mex, they ain't one Chink in five knows what it's all about. Nor white man, neither.

"They always is trouble in Shanghai. Boucoup trouble. Take it from me, man-child, don't never stir up anything in that man's town you ain't sure you can finish. It's bad medicine.

"Lord, lordy! It's all of ten years since I stirred the dust along the Yang-tse-kiang."

Old Timer settled himself more comfortably on the small of his bony back and prepared to hold forth.

"They thought I was too old and useless to do anything in the Big Squabble. I had an awful time findin' me a he-man's job.

"I located at last and hiked me down to the Philippines. Ilo-Ilo, right on the edge of Panay. Ran around for three, four months huntin' up sugar for a big concern out on the West Coast.

"Seems like I ain't got the guts I used to have. Fever and dysentery

laid me low, and first thing I know, the agent in Ilo-Ilo loaded me on one of them Shipping Board boats with instructions to land me back in the States.

"We stopped at Manila on the way up the coast and I dropped into the hospital there to get a shot of emetine for the dysentery. That didn't seem to do me much good, but I piled onto that old hooker again and we started out for Hong-Kong.

"We stayed there a while and I went ashore to that swell hospital the nuns run. Boy, they sure do know how to treat a white man in that place.

"By and by, the skipper, he sent word he was going to shove off that evening, so I toddled back to the ship.

"There wasn't no love lost between me and that skipper. He didn't want to take me in the first place. Allowed as how his wasn't no passenger liner, nohow.

"A couple of days out of Hong-Kong we ran into a tail-twisting typhoon. I like to died. Guess I would of, too, if it hadn't been for a Filipino mess-boy, name of Manuel.

"That kid couldn't have taken better care of me if I had been his own brother. Anyway, he nursed me through and after a while we made Shanghai.

"The old man sure had it in for me right. It would have suited his book for me to have died at sea so he could drop me over the side, casual-like, and make a neat little entry in his log book.

"A little two-by-twice cabin on a cargo hooker ain't no bed of roses at the best, but there in the dock at Shanghai, with the sun beatin' down on the deck, it was plain Hades.

"I might have been there yet, but a fella named Marshall, who was wharf and go-down manager for the Robert Dollar Company in Shanghai, come aboard one day and discovered me.

"Him and me had been right pally when I was on my way down to the Islands, and he got me off that ship pronto.

"He knocked the arms off the skipper's best bamboo deck-chair, without even a 'Thank you, sir,' called up a gang of those grinning Ning-po longshoremen of his, trussed me, deck-chair and all, into a cargo-sling and dropped me over the side into a launch.

"We had docked way up the river at Pai-lien-chien, and the cool air coming down that stream on the open deck of the launch sure was grateful.

"THERE was an ambulance waiting on the Bund for us and they dumped me in and carried me away to the Victoria Nursing Home.

"I always will have a soft place in my heart for the Limeys and especially for old Queen Vic. Yes, sir, they treated me right royal.

"They was a gang of them English Nursing Sisters runnin' that hospital.

"Mostly they wasn't much to look at. Buck teeth and sort of yellowish complexions, and they run more to bone and muscle than to curves, but they sure could make a hombre comfortable.

"I've looked up into the face of a big gal, with carrot red hair and a Scotch burr you could cut with a knife, and known they didn't make no angels any better lookin'.

"I was right sick. Seemed like somethin' had gone wrong and I was paralyzed from the waist down. Nobody knew just why, but all the saw-bones gave me just about twenty-four hours to live.

"I fooled 'em. Guess I was a lot tougher than I looked."

Old Timer paused to roll a cigarette with one hand, not disturbing the nice balance of his heels on the mantelpiece.

"Must have been five months I laid there not takin' much interest in anythin'.

"The crowd I worked for was good to me. They cabled Marshall to get the best and not spare any expense, so there I was in the swellest room in the place, with doctors and nurses and China-boys tumblin' over themselves to wait on me.

"You know how it was on the China coast just about that time. Things was a-poppin'.

"Kolchak and the rest up in Russia was playin' horse with the Czar.

"Revolutions and counter-revolutions was movin' so fast you had to have a stop-watch to ketch up with 'em, and the favorite indoor sport in Shanghai was buyin' roubles.

"They started in buyin' 'em thirty for a dollar, then fifty and a hundred and a thousand, and pretty soon you could buy a cartload for two-bits.

"Refugees from Vladivostock and Manchuria was comin' into Shanghai hundreds at a time and all the while the Germans was actin' up over on the western front. Nobody knew where they was headed.

"We couldn't count much on the Japs in a pinch. Most all of the military men in Nippon had been raised by hand by German drill-masters.

"I tell you the British and American navy boys on those flat-bottom, paddle-wheel cruisers patrolling the Yang-tse sure was jumpy."

Old Timer sighed. Evidently he missed the excitement of the old days. He demolished his cigarette in one long inhale and resumed:

"I had the front room in the hospital just over the entrance. They was a little balcony outside of the wide French windows, and the compound, surrounded by a brick wall, was just below.

"They was big double gates with a wooden bar lockin' them that led into the compound, so every time anybody came in I could tell by the squeaks and groans of the gates and the clatter in the yard. That all kept me from getting lonesome.

"After I began to get better and could sit up, I kept busy. There was a British navy man in the next room and he could move around some, so we got sort of chummy.

"I never will forget the Sunday morning that he and a couple of merchant skippers on the convalescent list was in my room learnin' the great American game of poker.

"I was gettin' rich when the door opened and the head Nursing Sister swept in.

"She didn't say nothin', just looked us over with one of those frosty British smiles. Somehow we lost all taste for poker that Sunday.

"FROM my window I could see a block of houses across the street. Shanghai is plumb civilized, if anybody should ask you.

"These houses was European type. A whole row about six stories tall. They was of a piece with the trolley cars, and the automobiles, and the traffic regulations.

"Of course it's pretty hard to make John Chinaman change his ways, so you still find coolies balancing huge loads on *bien-dans*, long bamboo poles they sort of bounce around on their shoulders.

"Peking carts, with solid wooden wheels, rickshaws and wheel-barrows crowd the streets, threading their way between the motor trucks and the Rolls-Royces, and you are just as likely to get a chit by a run-

ner as to have somebody call you on the phone.

"This here block of houses I could see out of my window was a bad place, they told me. It was full of Russian refugees and the Shanghai police kept a watchful eye on it.

"Almost anything could start out there, then, in the confusing, and lots of things did.

"Me, I was gettin' an eye-full. There was a fine-lookin' gal that sat in a window on the fourth floor of the house just opposite me, every afternoon.

"Sick or not, no matter how old I am, I still got a eye for a good-lookin' gal. She brightened up my days considerable, I mean to say.

"What I'm tryin' to get at is that I watched that block of houses sort of careful. "It struck me that somethin' phoney was goin' on in there, and I puzzled my heard tryin' to figure out just what.

"I spoke about it to the British navy man, but he just laughed at me and told me that layin' in bed had softened my brain. I shut up after that, but I still watched.

"Seems like you think a lot when you're layin' in bed with nothin' to do. I figured out all kinds of ways that a lot of treachery could be hatched up in Shanghai.

"Although they had kept me out of the scrap Over There, I wasn't pinin' none for the Allies to get the worst of it. You get sort of imaginative, as I said, when you're sick.

"Me, I thought it might be a dispensation of the Almighty if I was to be the instrument to circumvent some Bolsheviki deviltry.

"Every night about one or two o'clock coolies come along and washed down the street in front of the hospital. I told you that Shanghai is plumb civilized, and they had a pukka asphalt pavement there. The swish of the water was sort of pleasin', but it always woke me up.

"Then I had a dream. I was always runnin' along a wall with dozens of Chinkies after me. I'd stop and take a wallop at 'em, but my arm would be as heavy as lead and I couldn't seem to get no punch. Just about the time they swarmed over me, I'd wake up in a cold sweat.

"So with one thing and another I was awake most of the nights. Havin' nothin' else to do I used to lay and look over at the windows of those Russian houses.

"I guess maybe I had noticed it about three nights runnin', when one night the meanin' of somethin' I saw pulled me straight up in bed.

"You know the long, blue spark that shoots between the poles of a spark gap, or whatever they call it, on a high-powered radio set. They ain't nothin' in the world that is quite like it. Anybody that has seen it once could identify it anywhere.

"Well, through the window of the room where that good-lookin' honey-haired lady used to sit, so innocent like, every afternoon I could see one of them sparks.

"I watched it and it was ticking off dots and dashes just as lively as you please.

"I know the International code, like most everybody what has seen any action does, but this stuff was too fast for me.

"It dawned on me after a while that this was some sort of a secret code, and I couldn't see what in Tophet a high-powered radio set sendin' out secret code had to do with a block of Russian houses in the middle of Shanghai.

"That Britisher that had laughed at me sort of had my goat. I wasn't hankerin' to make no fool of myself with a false alarm, so I just watched.

"By and by it stopped.

"I didn't say nothin' the next day, though I like to bust, and I was so excited and feverish the nurse wanted to give me a sleepin' powder. I pretended to take it, but managed to dump it in the cuspidor under the bed.

"NOTHIN' happened the next night until about one-thirty. The street cleanin' gang came along as usual and sluiced down the hot asphalt, and then when they had cleared away, the thing started up again.

"This time there was no mistake. I watched it about half an hour, taking notes of the dots and dashes.

"I grabbed at the bell alongside the bed and when Ah Yee, the night-boy, at last came toddlin' in he thought I was crazy, I was so excited.

"'You catchum missy nurse, chop-chop,' I told that Chink, and he must have broken Charlie Paddock's record gettin' down the steps.

"Pretty soon Miss Forbes, the night nurse, came amblin' in lookin' surprised.

"'Now, see here,' she began, 'I can't have this. You get to sleep and stop wakin' up the whole hospital. Think you'd be ashamed,' she said.

"I didn't argue with her. I grabbed her arm and pulled her down, so she could see out of the window.

"'Did you ever see the spark on a big radio sending set?' I asked her.

"She sort of snorted. All of them gals in the hospital had put in their time on the Western Front. Most of 'em had been wounded and the British idea of a rest for 'em was to send 'em out to Shanghai for a year or so.

"'Certainly,' she says. 'What about it?'

"'Ain't that blue flash comin' through that window a flash from a wireless?' I asks.

"She looks long and hard. 'It certainly looks like it,' she admitted.

"'Well,' says I, and I guess I was some triumphant, 'what's it doin' in that dump?'

"That kinda stumps her. 'What do you want me to do about it?' she asks.

"I had been thinkin' about that.

"'You hop along next door and wake up Leftenant Hodges-Ingraham,' I tells her. 'He'll know.'

"She argues a little with me about it, but she could see just as well as I could that that thing didn't have no business there.

"Altogether, it was blame queer. The upshot of it was that she went in and got the Leftenant.

"Boy, howdy! If I had been excited about that spark, this British Johnnie was wild. He got so het up he forgot to drawl. When you can shake a British sailorman out of his calm, there is somethin' doin', an' I don't mean maybe.

"'Cheerio,' he whistled. 'We don't make much money, but we do see life. Who wouldn't sell his blinkin' little farm and go to sea?'

"'This jolly well looks like grief,' he said to me. 'Double-barreled grief for somebody, and with your permission,' he bowed just as nice as pie to Miss Forbes, 'I'm goin' to get the Port Intelligence officer here on the run. Pip-pip!' And, limpin' a little, he went out of the door like a shot.

"Well, the nurse and me, we just stayed there in the dark room and looked.

"They wasn't nothin' that we could do, but she took the pad and pencil that was there on the table beside my fever-chart, and she put down some more of the dots and dashes like I had started.

"The Leftenant, he come back after a while and told us that although his friend the Intelligence officer had laughed at him, he was on his way up to the hospital at the double.

"HE sure did come. It wasn't more than ten minutes before an auto with the officer and a dozen British Marines come pilin' up to the compound gates, and I could hear the clatter of the bar as the doorman let them in.

"They didn't make much noise, partly because they didn't want to wake the patients, and partly because they didn't want them Bolshies across the street to get wise.

"The marines, they stayed in the compound, but the officer come up the steps to my room two at a time.

"Them English never seem to get rattled, but if you want action and plenty of it, just you start somethin'.

"In next to no time he had all of the dope. He didn't say much, but he got right downstairs again. I could hear him giving low-voiced orders to his men, and then they moved out.

"I knew that they were coverin' that buildin', and God help anybody that tried to get away.

"Me an' the nurse an' the Leftenant just had to sit there an bite our nails an' wait.

"We could hear them marines poundin' on the door, an' lights began to flash here an' there all through the house. The window opposite stayed black an' the flashes stopped.

"POUNDIN' on the door didn't seem to get much results an' presently we heard the Intelligence officer give a command.

"Rifle butts in the hands of them British huskies made quick work of the door then.

"Hodges-Ingraham an' the nurse at the window had forgot all about me. I reckon I raised the whole hospital demandin' to know what was happenin'. Even so, they couldn't see much more than I could.

"The marines piled into the house, they was a few shrieks an' then men an' women began pourin' out in all kinds of night-clothes.

"As fast as they come through the door, the marines on duty jammed the business end of a gun into their middles an' lined 'em up.

"Suddenly the room in which we had seen the flashes lighted up. I could see that from my bed. They was a lot of scurryin' back an' forth, then the window flung open an' there was my blonde lady screamin' her head off.

"For a minute it looked like she was a-goin' to jump, but she changed her mind an' they marched her an' her boy friends down an' lined 'em up with the rest.

"That was about all 'ceptin' that the next day, while I was enjoyin' my tea, the nurse marches in. She was as stiff as a Seaforth pipe-major on parade.

" 'Gentleman to see you,' she announces, an' stood aside.

"In comes a British staff major. A regular brass-hat, high boots, spurs, red tabs, aguilette an' all.

"He clicks his heels together with his stick tucked up under his arm an' gives me a guardsman's salute.

" 'Sir,' he says, 'I am instructed to convey to you the compliments of Major General Sir Ewen Keith, commander-in-chief of His Majesty's troops in China. In the name of the King, Sir Ewen desires to thank you for the signal service rendered by you last night.'

"He was so young an' stiff an'

formal-like, darned if he didn't make me feel like an old fool.

"'Set down, boy,' I says. 'Set right down here an' make yourself comfortable an' I'll have some fresh tea brought right in.'

"If you can only get under their hides, like I been a-tellin' you, them Britishers is all right. He sat there the better part of an hour, yarnin' away about this an' that, but presently he had to go. Very diffident and shy-like he says to me:

"'I say, you know, Sir Ewen is awfully grateful and all that sort of thing. If there is anything that we can do for you—you know, fellow gets a bit hard pressed and all that—you have only to say the word.'

"Me, I laughed at him. 'They ain't a thing in God's world you can do for me,' I says—'unless, maybe now you could bring that blonde lady you took away last night to see me some afternoon.'

"He sort of hemmed an' hawed an' settled his belt. He didn't know whether or not I was kiddin' him.

"'Really now,' he said, 'frightfully sorry, but that's impossible. Dreadful lot of beggars over there—Russians and—rotters.

"'We just couldn't allow that, not right here in the midst of Shanghai. Had to make an example of the blighters. The lady had to go with the rest. Sorry,' he said again, an' he was gone."

The Old Timer sighed and scratched the back of his leg with a big toe. His tone was dreamy.

"Course I was some pleased, but I sure did miss that yella-headed gal in the long hot afternoons."

State Funeral For a Bird.

Under the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, a pair of young ravens built a nest on the roof of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, in the city of Rome.

One of the birds after a while flew down and took up its quarters in a shoemaker's store, where it listened gravely to conversation, and gradually acquiring speech, attracted attention and custom.

In time, about the same hour each morning, it used to leave the store and perch on the public orator's platform in the square. Then, in a distinct voice, it would salute the Emperor and his two sons, Drusus and Germanicus, by name. This done, it would also greet the passers-by affably. It continued to do this for many years, becoming a public figure in the city.

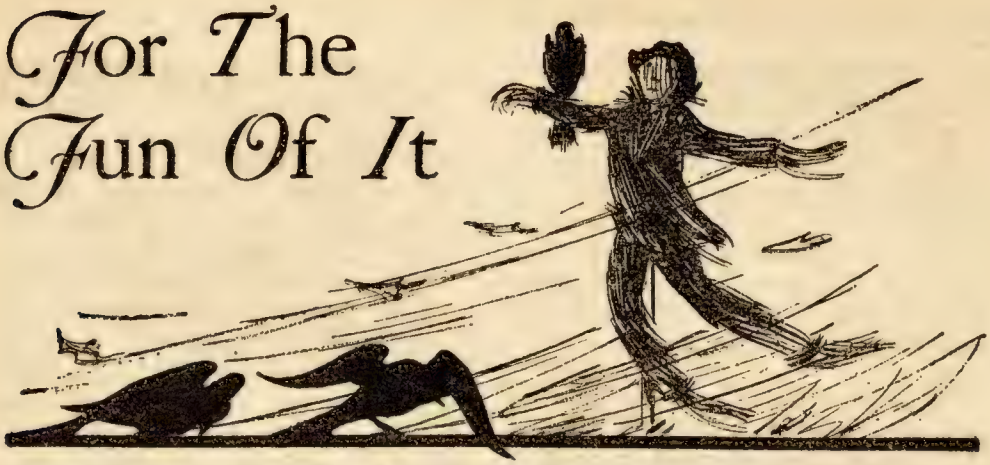
One day another shoemaker in the neighborhood, who was jealous of the trade the raven attracted to his rival, killed the bird, accusing it of fouling his wares. The populace rose in riot at this crime against a holy bird and gave short shrift to the murderer.

A public funeral was decreed to the raven.

The bird was borne on a bier supported by coal black Ethiopians. A flute player headed the procession of thousands of mourners bearing wreaths of flowers. In this impressive way the cortege made its way to the pyre, erected on the Appian way two miles out of the city, and amid loud mourning the bird was consumed by the flames.

Pliny, who tells the story, says that the raven received a grander funeral than many a prince before it, and that its death was more signally revenged than the murder of some of Rome's greatest men.

For The Fun Of It



By MAX EGLOFF

I AM not a man easily impressed by events, no matter how unusual. To be quite honest, I think of myself as a hard-headed, somewhat cynical lawyer.

That I am stirred by my experience in the home of Walter Andrews, even to the extent of writing about it, is matter I suppose for psychological investigation.

I had been acquainted with Andrews for eighteen years, but never, until that terrible night, was there any sort of intimacy between us. No one, to my knowledge, ever broke down the formal reserve which he wore like armor.

Our dealings were, for the most part, limited to the field of legal business.

Andrews had property—apartment houses and business blocks—amounting to well over three million dollars, and I have acted as his legal adviser ever since he inherited his father's estate.

I first met Andrews at Harvard where we were both students in the law school.

He was tall and gaunt, a man of no particular age. His face was bloodless and sunken, with protruding cheek bones and a high, pallid forehead under unkempt black hair. His features were fixed and expressionless except for a suggestion of hostility in his small eyes.

He would drop into my room now and then, to borrow a note-book or ask about an assignment.

I suppose he must have had some sort of liking for me, although he never gave any unmistakable evidence of it. I really believe that not another member of the class knew Andrews by name.

He left at the end of his first year, and I very quickly forgot him.

Not long after I began my practice in New York City, I ran into him, quite by accident, at the Harvard Club. He introduced himself to me, assuming rather sourly that I would not remember him.

About a month later the metropolitan newspapers vibrated with the news of the sensational death of John Andrews, millionaire realtor.

All that was actually known, as I recall, was that John Andrews, a man past seventy years of age, had somehow managed to climb out onto a flag-pole, projecting from a window ledge of his office on an upper floor of a downtown building, and that it had broken under his weight.

The fact that he had clung to the pole, and not thrown himself from the window, was established by wit-

nesses from the street, and by the presence of the shattered end of the stick on the pavement near his body.

The newspapers insinuated diabolical murder, among other explanations, but the official investigation disclosed nothing more lurid than testimony offered by several servants, to the effect that the old man had been "acting queer."

IT was after this event that Walter Andrews came to my office for the first time. That interview impressed me to an unusual degree.

It was momentous, of course, from a professional point of view. In those days every new client was important, and one as productive of legal work as Walter Andrews a true gift of the gods.

But there was also something in his manner, a restrained excitement, which lent even the commonplaces of our conversation an extraordinary significance.

He began immediately with the statement that his father had died, and that there were certain minor difficulties regarding the inheritance.

It occurred to me, suddenly, that the man who had fallen from the flag-pole might have been Andrews' father, and I asked him about it. I have never quite forgotten his answer.

"Yes," he said coldly. "He was my father. He was also, in everything but business, a pitiable fool, a deliberate, vicious bungler."

He hesitated a moment.

"And, you may as well know, *I* was his chief victim."

"But why——" I ventured.

"Exactly!" he took me up. "Why did he try to climb to the tip of a flag-pole? I have only one thing to say about that. It is that I impute no blame to myself—none whatsoever. He alone is responsible for his death—and for his son."

That interview was the beginning of our fifteen years of business association.

And from that day to the very end, Andrews never spoke to me again of his personal affairs, nor volunteered, even indirectly, any explanation of his sinister hint that he was, in some way, connected with his father's death. The whole incident was out of my mind for years.

Andrews was not, however, particularly reticent, and I have seldom thought of him as secretive.

On the occasions when I have been invited to his home, he has always talked freely, often brilliantly, on topics of interest to him.

Hunting fascinated him, but it was the actual killing, I believe, which attracted him, rather than the technique of the chase. He, now and again, became warmly emotional in describing his experiences with a rifle in Canada, in India, in South America.

The apartment which he finally built for himself contained a large, windowless room, which was called a study, but might better have been named the "den."

On its walls were hung the skins of hundreds of animals—bears of all varieties, lions, cougars, even a zebra. Skins of reptiles were strung along the top as a sort of border or cornice. He was very proud of his collection of pelts—pathologically so, I sometimes thought.

When he was at home, Andrews spent most of his time alone in this study. He ate many of his meals in a dungeon-like alcove built into a side of the room.

ANDREWS married soon after his father's death. I met his wife three or four times. She was a truly beautiful woman, dignified, serene and peculiarly unapproachable. From the little which I observed of their rela-

tions, it was quite clear to me that he had a profound love for her.

A year after their marriage, a son was born, but at the expense of the mother's life.

It was following this unfortunate event that Andrews turned all his business affairs over to me, obtained a letter of credit for fifty thousand dollars, and dropped completely out of sight for nearly two years.

I did not know then what he had done with the child. When he returned, I ventured to ask him where he had been.

"Traveling," he replied briefly, "to various ends of the earth."

Later he recounted, now and then, some of his adventures, but I never had a consistent account of his journey.

Except for an occasional hunting expedition, his life from that time to the day of his second marriage, three years ago, seemed as secluded and uneventful as a monk's. His choice of a second wife was, however, as surprising as his reference to his father's death, or his sudden and inexplicable disappearance.

She was, in almost every respect, the antithesis of the first. She was not more than half Andrews' age, and had, I should say, less than a tenth of his intelligence.

Her beauty, if one could call it that, was of the trivial, intimate sort which, in earlier days, was classified as the "college widow" type.

Whether Andrews acquired her as a talisman against the evils of approaching old age, or for what other reason, I did not know.

I was aware, however, that her continual flirtations with other men aroused in Andrews a most virulent jealousy.

I remember a scene between them which occurred toward the end of the first year of their marriage.

Andrews and I had dined together in the alcove off his study. We were discussing an important business matter over our coffee, when Andrews suddenly fell silent, rang for his man, and asked him sharply if Mrs. Andrews was in.

When the servant answered that she was just leaving, he ordered him to stop her and bring her to the study.

I could hear what was said between them, although I could not see them from where I was sitting in the alcove.

"You have your hat and coat on," he said in a matter of fact way.

"I was going out," she answered cautiously.

"You might better send your maid," he commented mildly.

"I was going to the theatre," she explained.

"Exactly!" he snapped. "With the Herr Professor What's-His-Name, I.D.I.O.T. I was already aware of it."

"Wel-l-l?" she faltered.

"Send your maid!" he almost screamed. "It's a slut's business!"

The next instant I heard the door slam, and in a moment he was back again in his place at the table, answering the question which I had asked when he broke off our conversation to ring for his man. I noticed, however, when he raised his cup that his hand was not quite steady.

Andrews never mentioned his son, and, since the expenses of his upbringing and education never once entered into the accounts under my supervision, the very fact of the child's existence gradually slipped from my mind.

A MONTH ago I went to Andrews' home one evening to confer with him relative to the sale of a block of suburban lots.

The butler asked me to wait in

the study, saying that Mr. Andrews would join me in a few minutes. As I opened the door I heard quick footsteps within.

The room was dimly lit by a single lamp, and the shaggy skins on the walls, with here and there a dully gleaming eye, gave the place a fantastic appearance.

I looked about discreetly, fearing that I might be intruding, but could see no one. Curious, I advanced to the middle of the room and glanced into the alcove where I had so often eaten.

A man stood there facing me.

"Good evening," I ventured.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Good evening." He came forward then, and I saw that he was a young man, under twenty, soberly dressed.

I introduced myself, adding a word of explanation concerning my relations with Andrews.

"I am Moser Andrews," he answered, "Mr. Andrews' son."

For an instant his statement seemed preposterous to me—as though he had said, "I am *your* son."

"I must be going," he said nervously. "You have business with my father."

I urged him to keep me company until his father came.

"Well—I—I really ought to go," he replied. "I only wanted to see father about—about something."

I realized that the boy was trembling. Whether it was sympathy or pure curiosity, I felt very much drawn to him. I said to him kindly:

"Sit down! Tell me about yourself. I might have known you since you were born, you know, if you had been around."

"Yes," he answered doubtfully. "She—I've been told about you."

His embarrassment suddenly became acute.

"She—that is, Dorothy—mother's spoken of you."

"Well, it's high time we got acquainted," I answered in an attempt to put him at his ease. "Please sit down and talk a minute."

We sat down, Moser taking a chair near the table in the direct light from the lamp. I studied his face.

There was a fresh, boyish look about it which struggled through the agitation he was evidently trying to conceal. I thought I detected a weary, haunted expression about his eyes, but I could not be sure.

I admired his lean, strong jaw, his firm mouth and steady eyes. They shouted courage and determination. I remember thinking that I could have done with such a son myself.

"Where have you been?" I prompted him.

"Father has never told you?" he asked.

"No," I admitted, feeling somewhat chagrined, "he has never mentioned you to me."

"Of course not," he continued with a trace of bitterness. "He never came to see me—he never wrote me, either. I'd never even heard of him until he sent for me six months ago."

"But he sent you money," I suggested.

"I never saw it if he did," he replied, and added laconically: "I earned my own way through high school."

"Where was that?" I asked, to cover my surprise.

"In Vermont," he answered. "A small town. I was brought up by the town drayman and his wife. They were kind to me."

This was astonishing news. Andrew had apparently thrown the child away as carelessly as he would have flipped a cigarette butt into the street. Why, then, had he brought

him back? It was, however, a difficult question to put to Moser.

"And so he sent for you?" I insinuated.

"Why did he send for me?" the boy shot back tensely. "He despises me! He makes fun of me! Was that the only reason he sent for me—just to have someone to make fun of?"

The utter contrast between the characters of this father and son came to me suddenly.

The son, optimistic, frank, companionable—the father, cynical, designing, unsociable. They were made, it seemed, expressly to annoy each other.

And my sympathies were all with the boy; he was so clearly the under dog.

"You don't *have* to stay, I suppose," I suggested warmly.

"And I wouldn't, either, if—if—" he began. "But I can't! I don't know what to do!" he concluded, finally unmasking his desperation.

"Perhaps I could do something—to help you," I intimated.

"No!" he said positively. "Nobody can help. It's between father and me!"

Andrews came in at this point, gave the boy a sharp glance, and said to him with peculiar significance:

"Go to your mother! She's expecting you."

In these comparatively few words I have related everything of importance which I knew concerning Walter Andrews' private life prior to the evening when he threw off all disguises and showed himself for the fanatical monster that he was.

WE HAD been working together for some time, putting his business affairs in order, to the end that he might make a new will.

Doctors, so he told me, had warned him that he had developed pernicious anemia which would, rather sooner than later, mean his death.

I went to his home that evening, thinking that my only business would be to draw up the will.

Andrews was waiting for me in the study when I arrived at eight o'clock. The table in the alcove was set for dinner.

He was in an expansive mood, and during the first courses delivered for my benefit a witty, ironic monologue on the current blunders of politicians and economists.

Then, without changing the cynically jocular tone of his discourse, he began talking about himself. I must have shown my surprise, for he said:

"It's time you knew something about me, Mason—after eighteen years. Really, your chronic lack of curiosity has astounded me. Pleased me, too, of course. It's getting very near the end, Mason. I've a premonition."

There was a pause.

"Tonight," he went on deliberately, "is as good a night to die as any. There is no storm outside, I believe, but in a room with no windows all weathers are the same. You might try to stir up a gale with a newspaper, if you think it more appropriate."

"Where are the lilies?" I asked, clumsily trying to fall in with his ironic mood. "There can be no death without a lily."

"You don't know how ugly death can be," he took me up sharply. "But there are several things I want to tell you, Mason—things about myself. I've been saving them for years for your amusement—and for my own. Don't think for a minute that I'm talking now from a sense of duty."

"I know enough about you," I returned, annoyed at his persistence.

"You know nothing, Mason. Nothing beyond a few annoying tag-ends.

"You do not know, for instance, that my father climbed out along the flag-pole—you remember the circumstances of his death—because *I* told him to.

"He was quite hopelessly looney at the end. Money was all he cared about all his life, and, just before he died, it narrowed down to gold, hard, shining gold, metal that you can see and stroke with your hand."

"One minute!" I interrupted peevishly. "I'm not a father confessor!"

"I'm telling you this simply to amuse you," retorted Andrews suavely.

"Listen! I was sitting at the corner of my father's desk that afternoon. His office was a hideous place, gilded from top to bottom. There were gilt chairs, gilt wall paper, a golden brown rug.

"It was a gloomy day, and he had turned on a single light that glowed like living gold. He was sitting there at his desk, hunched over a pile of nuggets that he'd got, heaven knows where. I said to him:

"'I know where there is more gold than that!'

"'It's everywhere,' he answered. 'In the earth and on the earth, but just the same a body never finds any. It's mysterious,' he said, 'as if it was always disappearing just ahead of you.'

"The sun came out just then and lit up the gilded ball at the end of the flag-pole outside the window. I pointed to it.

"'There's gold for you!' I said. 'And it won't disappear in front of you. You've only got to reach out there and get it!'

"And so——"

"Yes, yes," I put in. "And so he climbed out to get it, and broke his neck. Your imagination, at least, is not anemic!"

He toyed with a fork a moment and then said softly:

"It may be that I pushed a little. It's even possible that I held the muzzle of a revolver against the nape of his neck. Personally I prefer the parable."

"What are you saying?" I cried.

"That I killed my father," he answered evenly. "How long he clung like a rat to that pole! But you don't know, of course, how richly he deserved what he got.

"He baited me from the time I was a child. He took pleasure in blocking every desire of mine. It was because of him that I left Harvard—he thought I liked the life there.

"And it was because of him, too, that I had to put off my marriage—until after his death.

"Oh, he trained me—he invited me, to kill him.

"But that's all old, forgotten stuff. What I've told you about him has no particular connection with the rest. Just a prologue, perhaps, to generate the proper atmosphere."

"Well," I said, trying my best not to be outdone in composure.

"Well, in one particular at least, I'm like my father, Mason. In my life I've only loved one thing—and it hasn't been money.

"You knew her, Mason, and you knew, I suspect, that I loved her. But no one knows, no one can know, how desperately I loved her!"

He said this fiercely, paused for a moment, and resumed in a tone of flippant irony, "Silly, romantic way of doing. Who but a fool would stake his happiness on anything so perishable as a woman?"

HE HAD suddenly become mocking, vindictive. His eyes blazed insanely. He waited for a response, but I could find nothing to say.

"I didn't want a child," he went on calmly. "She was all I wanted. But she insisted, and so I swapped a life for a life.

"And was I cheated? I ask you, as a business man, Mason, *was I cheated?* You've seen the stick of wood I got in return for all her beauty, for her companionship, for her love!"

"I like the boy," I declared aggressively.

"Bah! There is nothing to say for him," he retorted. "He is a simpleton! A ninny! In short, Mason, the poor lad is perfect only as a fraud!"

"You forget, perhaps," I suggested, "that whatever else he is or is not, he *is* your son."

"I do not consider him my son," he replied coldly. "I consider him her murderer!"

This, I thought, was an impertinent exaggeration which reflected on my own dignity, and I said to him:

"You insist on this profound sentiment for your dead wife, and yet you have obviously cared so little that you have put another woman in her place. You have been jealous——"

"I've offended you, Mason," he interrupted impatiently. "I'm sorry. You always become stupidly academic when you're offended. It's a sure sign.

"But maybe you were sincere in saying that. How could a born mummy like you know the difference between love—and love?

"I married again, yes. But I did not love again! This woman I am living with—what is she to me? Well, less than the skin of a Mongolian tiger, and more than a drawing by Durer.

"I took her, if you please, out of sheer vanity."

"I repeat that you have been jealous," I insisted.

"You over-simplify the matter," he remonstrated politely. "I have been exasperated, indignant, angry—as any man would be who discovered that he was being put upon.

"I have felt, in a milder form, the same feelings toward a chauffeur, when I discovered that he had been joy-riding in my cars.

"And there has also been a large element of disgust in what you so glibly call my jealousy. By going with another man, my wife contaminates herself. It is the same as though a dog had chewed at this meat before it was brought to the table."

"You wish to imply that your wife has been unfaithful?" I asked, showing my annoyance.

"Well, let us say that I was speaking generally. She is hardly important enough to slander. The boy——

"But, there, Mason! I must be a good showman. You're witnessing a little play tonight. In due course there will be a climax, a denouement, and—possibly—an unobtrusive anti-climax.

"Just keep your seat to the end, Mason. It will get better as we go along."

The suggestion of hysteria, which I had noticed in his manner from the first, seemed to be growing more pronounced. I was beginning to feel distinctly uneasy.

To what was Andrews referring? Why had he suddenly become another man? He sat before me like a living portent of disaster.

I could not meet his sinister, laughing eyes. There was in me an incessant urge to do something to avert an unknown catastrophe, but I could think of nothing to do, nothing except, perhaps, to bring the conversation around to less poignant themes.

With this end in mind, I said:

"Moser is an unusual name. How did the boy come by it?"

"Make a guess," he urged excitedly.

Evidently I had taken a wrong tack.

"The surname of a relative?" I hazarded.

"Wrong," he pronounced. "Moser was the name of my worst enemy in those days."

THE meal was finished, even to the coffee, but Andrews made no move to leave the table. He smoked his cigar calmly, and was, at the moment, studying the backs of his large bony hands, which he had placed flat upon the cloth.

"You have a strange diet for a sick man," I remarked, remembering with something of a start that the same heavy dinner had been served to us both.

"When a man can no longer enjoy his food, it is time for him to die," he answered.

"Shall we get to business?" I hinted.

"Oh, the will," he said. "I've already drawn it up and had it witnessed. You might look it over."

He took the document from his pocket and handed it to me. I read it.

To the wealthiest man in America he had left "ten dollars for a new muffler."

One hundred thousand dollars in stock of English distilleries was willed to three prominent apostles of prohibition, on the condition that they retain the securities and personally attend the meetings of stockholders.

Fifty thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills was to be distributed among the lunatics in a state asylum, and another fifty thousand was set aside to provide "an annual picnic in memory of my death for box-holders of the Metropolitan Opera."

Everything else he left to a museum of natural history, to be used in any way that the authorities of the institution saw fit. In case any of the bequests were forfeited, the money was to go to me or my heirs.

"You've been amusing yourself," I laughed uncomfortably.

"True," he said. "And I hope, when it is made public, it will amuse others."

"Do you mean that this is a serious document?" I exclaimed.

"Quite definitely my last will and testament," he replied.

"But you've left nothing at all to the boy—or to your wife," I expostulated, not seeking to conceal my irritation.

"My wife," he returned, "has money of her own. Plenty, that is, to carry her along comfortably until she can find another fool to support her."

"And why should the boy be left out?" I demanded.

"You've already answered that for yourself. You're thinking: 'Andrews dislikes the boy and so he leaves him nothing.'

"It's true that I dislike him. It's true, even, that I despise him. But my antipathy has nothing to do with my leaving him out of the will. On the contrary, I've done that to please him!"

I scoffed at this.

"It's plain you don't know him," Andrews went on patiently. "He is not only dull, he is also high-minded. It's startling to find an individual of his stamp in this disillusioned, weary, younger generation.

"He believes in the purity of women and the honesty of men. He insists on the rugged virtue of independence. Nothing, he thinks, is rightfully his that he has not earned

through hard and conscientious labor. So you see——"

"I see that you're wilfully unjust to the boy," I interrupted indignantly. "Is it his fault that he is inexperienced? Is it his fault that he is, according to your standards, dull?

"And, above all, is it his fault that his mother died in bringing him into the world? You talk more like a fanatical persecutor than a father!"

"It's true," he observed judiciously. "My attitude toward him *is* fanatical. And a fanatic cannot be cured—he can only be destroyed.

"However, in this one matter of the inheritance, I have acted with virtuous consideration for the boy's own wishes. How easy—how tempting—it is to annoy him by leaving him the entire fortune! What simpler and surer way of smashing all his pretty little ideals?

"Say I'm deserving of some credit, Mason! Or, rather, don't say it now, but remember it—later."

"And those absurd bequests?" I queried sarcastically.

"See that the papers get a notice of them," he answered. "I've had my fun out of them. And I don't see why you should worry. Some of that money, at least, will probably come to you in the end."

"You speak," I stated a bit uneasily, "as though you were already at the last gasp."

Andrews took out his watch and glanced at it casually.

"I have a few minutes left," he said seriously. "If there is anything else you'd like to know——"

I jumped up at that and banged my fist on the table.

"What are you hinting at, Andrews?" I cried. "What are you planning? Why did you ask me here tonight? Either you answer these questions now, or I leave!"

I STOOD there trembling with emotion which must have been as much terror as anger, certain in that moment that I was being prodded implacably on to the brink of some dreadful tragedy.

Andrews looked at me curiously. Then, with great deliberation, he took his watch from its chain and laid it face up on the table.

"Your imagination, my dear Mason, is running away with you," he chided gently. "Who would have thought it possible?"

He paused, and went on: "There is really no reason for your alarm. I invited you here to amuse you; nothing else.

"The drama I spoke of is not a tragedy. Please don't ever consider it so. It is a farce, a highly entertaining farce, I hope. Something that I have arranged just for the fun of it. Sit down! Have another cigar!"

And I sat down.

I sat down, I realize now, because I could not possibly have brought myself to leave. It was as though Andrews had snared me in the net of his machinations. I was bewildered.

"It is time that the stage was set," Andrews went on. "If you will excuse me for a moment——"

He got up and went into the main body of the room.

Mechanically I followed him, but, recollecting myself, halted just beyond the table, and stood, peering into the dim study, lit, as usual, by the single lamp on the table opposite.

I looked fearfully around at the skins stretched upon the walls. I imagined them animated by the vengeful spirits of the beasts which they had covered.

Almost, I think, to reassure myself, I reached out to touch the pelt nearest me. The hair felt coarse

and wiry. I stroked it, scarcely knowing what I was doing. Andrews, who had been busying himself at the study table, noted the gesture.

"I've told you about that skin, haven't I?" he asked.

"That's Canada Jack, a royal grizzly if ever there was one. Killed a man, you remember, before they got to him. He played dead, fooled them completely. Broke an Indian's back and had most of the skin off the fellow before somebody could put a bullet in the animal's heart.

"I've surely told you the story. . . . A bear with a spark of humor. He must have sensed the futility of it, don't you think?"

I wanted to jeer at Andrews, to let him know that he was not fooling me in the least with all his sinister bravado. A speech formed itself in my mind. I was going to say:

"You're simply making an ass of yourself, Andrews. You forget that I *know* you. You're a perfectly ordinary normal man. Why all this play-acting? Don't think for a minute that you're taking me in! *I know you!*"

"But I couldn't speak the words. The sudden conviction of Andrews' sincerity blocked their utterance. I began watching him intently, with a sort of belligerency.

He had been writing at the table. Now he took from a drawer of the table a packet of what appeared to be letters and propped it, together with the note which he had written, against the base of the table lamp.

A screen was leaning against the wall near me. He walked over and put his hands on it.

"Step back into the alcove, will you?" he said. "I want to put this screen across in front." And he added: "It's an amateur cast and very audience-shy."

In spite of an impulse to rebel, I retired meekly. Andrews carefully placed the screen so as to completely shut off the alcove from the rest of the room. Slipping around one end, he sat down opposite me.

I was aware that he was excited, elated rather, like a small boy who has just been promised a ticket for the circus. I felt annoyed and curious and peculiarly impotent.

Andrews glanced quickly at his watch.

"If you don't mind," he said eagerly, "we'll just try out the lighting effect." He switched off the alcove lights. "Pull your chair up close to the screen."

When we were seated to his satisfaction, he exclaimed, "There! Perfect, isn't it?"

"How should I know?" I answered curtly.

The screen was covered with a light transparent material. Everything in the room beyond was almost as clearly visible as though there had been no obstruction. I could even make out the sheet of paper which Andrews had propped against the lamp.

"You'll understand in a moment," he encouraged. "Be just a little patient, Mason. And, if it isn't asking too much, be silent. The fun begins directly!"

We sat without speaking. Now and then I could hear Andrews moving restlessly in his chair. I thought I could detect the ticking of his watch on the table behind us.

An oppressive melancholy came upon me, making me torpid and indifferent. The green of the rug caught my eye. It reminded me of a close-cut turf.

Instantly, from some remote corner of my mind, flashed a picture of a barbaric priest offering human sacrifice on an altar in a sacred grove.

My calm disappeared under a new wave of apprehension. I drew a sharp involuntary breath. Andrews cautioned me to be quiet.

THERE was a slight noise at the study door. I saw the light from the outer hall spread a yellow swath across the room as it was opened.

Moser Andrews entered, closing the door behind him. His face was not distinctly visible in the faint light, but there was no mistaking him.

He seemed to be looking toward the table with the lamp on it. Apparently he noticed the note set against the base, for he went straight across and took it in his hands.

He flattened it on the table under the light, and, resting a hand on either side, bent forward to read it.

As he read he become restless, agitated. Seizing the packet, he violently burst the string that bound it, picked up the top envelope, and stood for a moment, irresolute, staring at it.

A kind of fury seemed to awaken him. Savagely he tore out the letter, and, holding it under the light, read at a furious rate, indicated by the movement of his head made in following the lines.

The letter dropped from his hand. He jerked himself suddenly erect and spun around, as though he thought someone was behind him. For a moment he stook stock still, then took two or three quick steps toward the door.

I glanced at Andrews, and could discern him hunched forward in his chair, like a rooter at a football game.

When I looked again at Moser, he was stumbling back to the table. He sank into a chair facing us, the light full upon him. Something about his expression struck me, and I strained my eyes to make out what it was. In a flash I understood.

The boy was terror-stricken. I could make out the convulsive twitching of his lips, his wide-staring eyes.

Of course I knew that the message which Andrews had written was the cause of Moser's fright, but I did not even feel the desire to demand an explanation from the man at my side.

I accepted, unaccountably, the idea that I was witnessing a spectacle—a play which would explain itself in due course. Fascinated, I continued to stare.

A quivering moan from the boy. He began to sob, and tears glistened on his cheeks.

His face took on a lugubrious, pitiful appearance, and if there had not been the illusion of intervening footlights to stay me, I would surely have gone to comfort him.

Moser finally stopped sobbing, and reached uncertainly for the pile of letters at his elbow. He read them, one after the other, methodically and with painful care.

When he had finished, he took up the note, and went through it slowly, pondering, it seemed, the meaning of every word.

Then, with a swift motion of his hand, he snatched a newspaper from the table and flung it on the floor, keeping his eyes fixed on the spot where it had been.

He put out his hand to touch whatever it was that lay there. Picking up the object, he held it under the light.

It was a revolver—an old-fashioned six-shooter.

At the sight of it I half rose from my chair, but Andrews put a restraining hand on my arm. I sank back with a feeling of utter helplessness.

The boy, meanwhile, had gotten to

his feet. He held the pistol in his hand, a finger, I guessed, on the trigger. The other hand rested on the table, supporting him.

Frozen with horror, I saw him raise the weapon. Just as I was about to cry out, the gun fell to the floor, and the boy slumped down on his knees. He dropped his head on his arms, crossed upon the table.

"Oh God!" I heard him gasp. "Oh God!"

It was frightful. I was faint with dread, and at the same time powerless—as powerless, I felt, as though I were sitting there bound and gagged.

Moser's arms slid from the table. He was on his hands and knees, groping for the pistol.

He had touched it! He was up, stiffly erect beside the chair. The pistol barrel gleamed in the light. The muzzle was pressing against his forehead.

I heard the click of the trigger—saw the boy collapse.

The next instant I leaped, screaming, from my chair, crashed through the flimsy screen, and raced to his side.

"Lad! Lad!" I cried, kneeling down. "What has he done to you?"

He sat up, staring at me dazedly. I became aware that someone was laughing uproariously. Turning, I saw Andrews looking down at us, his face contorted with furious mirth.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he bellowed. "Perfect! Perfect!"

I went up to him and shook my fist in his face. I was too angry to speak articulately. He stopped his guffawing then.

"You don't see the point yet, Mason," he wheezed. "Read the note!"

I SNATCHED the paper from the table and read:

"The matter of your flirtation with my wife has, as you might have guessed, been obvious to me for weeks.

"I am not particularly concerned with the nature of the intimacies in which you have indulged. The so-called 'ultimate' is only the far end of the same trail, that begins with a glance and a touch of the hand.

"Neither do I deem it important that she has been the aggressor, and you have attempted to exercise some measure of manly restraint. In a hunt of this nature, the prey is rarely taken absolutely against his will—and you have confessed that you love her.

"You have asked that I permit her to divorce me, and here is the answer that I promised:

"*I* will bring suit for divorce, naming *you* as corespondent, and with full publicity. And I will do this whether it meets with your approval or not.

"If you are dissatisfied with my intention, there is only one thing for a man of honor and principle, such as yourself, to do.

"I have obligingly left a means under the newspaper on this table. No one will disturb you.

"And, I repeat, that if you fail to do what I suggest, the whole unsavory matter will be aired in the courts."

Below, Moser had scrawled: "We are both innocent. I do it for her."

Andrews grabbed the paper from my hand and glanced at it.

"Ho, ho!" he crowed. "Richer and richer! So you are both innocent, are you?"

Moser leaped to his feet and faced his father.

"I've never even kissed her!" he cried. "You know it's true!"

"Yes, yes," said Andrews impatiently. "I believe you. You're precisely that kind of a fool."

"And you don't love her!" Moser

raced on vehemently. "You treat her like a dog! You've been nothing but her jailer! You're the one that deserves to die!"

I saw him look quickly for the revolver on the floor.

"Well, well," Andrews commented in a tone of mock surprise. "Let me go on with what I was saying. I was referring to my wife, not to you.

"You declare her also to be innocent. You've written that you did it for her, in other words, to save her reputation—to save, that is, something that never existed!

"Your artlessness is delicious, my dear boy. You never guessed that this woman has had a dozen lovers!"

Moser started forward, angry eyes blazing from his white face.

Andrews made a deprecatory gesture.

"Don't disturb yourself," he soothed. "I'm not slandering her." He jerked out the drawer of the table, extracted a packet of letters, which he tossed at the boy's feet.

"Here's evidence," he said airily. "Look it over at your leisure!"

Moser let himself fall back into the chair.

"But you didn't pull the trigger for her, boy. You were only trying to be the glorious idealist!"

"Andrews!" I shouted, catching up the revolver. "I won't stand for this! The boy's had all he can bear! It's a miracle he isn't dead!"

"A miracle?" Andrews questioned ironically. "The gun, as any clever man would have guessed, was not loaded."

I looked at it foolishly.

"Not loaded?" I repeated.

Andrews took the weapon from me, holding it lightly, his finger resting against the trigger.

"Certainly not," he said casually. "That was the seed of the joke."

He studied my face which, at the moment, must surely have presented a strange combination of indignation and distrust.

"You don't believe me?" he asked. "Watch!"

Keeping his eyes always on my face, Andrews put the muzzle of the revolver in his mouth. There was an explosion which seemed to have taken place inside of my own skull. When I recovered my wits, Andrews lay dead at my feet.

The coroner examined the gun. Every chamber of the cylinder but one had contained a cartridge.

The Carterville Apparition

By REGINALD SWEETLAND

WITH considerable trepidation Dr. Noel Griegson presented himself before the Dean of the Faculties in that person's immaculate office in the Administration Building.

"Doctor Johnstone," he began in a low voice, over-awed by his own temerity, "I have come to ask you if you will be good enough to present my petition to President Blythe, in which I have asked him—or, rather, requested him—if he will be so good as to grant me a two weeks' leave of absence from my academic duties in order that I may conduct a few experiments."

"I understand, Doctor Griegson."

"I feel that the President might consider it something of an imposition on my part to make such a request at this stage of the semester, but, on the other hand, I also feel that my work has reached that point at which it can only be carried to a fruitful conclusion if I am assured of the certainty that only a week or two of experimentation can give it.

"Hence my request, which I trust the President of the University will be pleased to grant me, not so much as a personal favor as in the interest of science—or, rather, that small corner of the field in which I am undertaking research work."

Doctor Griegson paused, surprised at his own volubility and eager for some sign that he was not presuming too much.

The Dean considered a moment, then asked:

"Who will conduct your classes while you are away?"

"Mr. Anderson, my assistant, has signified his willingness to take over the work. He is not an unworthy substitute."

"Very well, Doctor. I shall be pleased to recommend that the President grant your petition."

"Thank you. Thank you so much."

The following morning Doctor Griegson was notified by the President's secretary that his request for a two weeks' leave had been granted.

That same morning a notice appeared on Doctor Griegson's lecture-room door in Physics Hall. It read:

"Owing to the temporary absence of Professor Greigson from the campus, his classes will be conducted by Mr. Anderson."

It was also on that same morning that Doctor Griegson left his house on Baddeley Street.

His housekeeper, Mrs. Dormer, stood in the doorway and watched the Doctor drive off in the transfer wagon, and if she was startled at the astonishing amount of heavy luggage that he took with him for so short an absence, she said nothing. She already thought him a little mad.

So Doctor Griegson virtually disappeared, telling no one his destination, and as far as the campus was concerned he was blotted out of existence.

THE town of Carterville was so situated that it had the appearance of being just about to slip off the lap of the Coastal Range into the Pacific. One small shove and it would have been in. The splash would not have been a big one.

Carterville, if it did nothing else, invoked repose. Its inhabitants—there were some seven hundred of them—found it as easy to sleep under the glittering sunshine as under the cloak of night.

Nothing had happened there in years—in fact, nothing of any moment had occurred since the time Fred Waters attacked the town with the first motorcycle seen in those parts.

It was a funny-looking contraption covered with red paint, and Fred puttered his way up the main street to give his fellow natives a treat for their money.

He gave them greater value than he had intended. When he got along about even with Jaynes' drugstore, he lost control of the thing under his knees, turned on the accelerator and shot the rest of the length of the street in three amazing leaps.

He landed, machine with him, among the corn-flake packages in Jarvis' grocery window. This little episode of the young upstart turned back the clock at Carterville fully twenty-five years.

It was only during the past year or two that the town was beginning to recover ground and to make up for some of the things it had lost in the dark ages of its career.

And then, suddenly, one night the town experienced a new and alarming thrill. It was of far more importance than the motorcycle epic, since it seemed capable of promoting complications and led to endless conjecturing on the part of the town's leading inhabitants.

A blinding flash of light, accompanied by no noise, burst from over the night horizon out at sea. How far it was from the coastline none could tell.

It happened on a Wednesday night. Jim Maddox was among those who saw this strange phenomenon; in fact, Jim thought he was the only one.

He had come, wobbling rather more than slightly, from the back-room of Jaynes' drugstore where the prescriptions are made up. Charting his way home and mulling over in his mind some sort of plausible lie to tell his wife, he had seen the flash where the street takes a bend over the cliff.

Jim, because of the nature of his

condition, kept his own counsel and told nobody what he had seen. That is to say, he did not attempt to describe it in detail.

He merely contented himself with telling his wife that he had been shot at, and let it go at that. His wife, of course, refused to believe him when she had smelt his breath and had put him under the blankets.

That was on Wednesday night, along about ten o'clock.

On Thursday, toward noon, Jim ambled into the room back of the drugstore and asked Phil Jaynes where he had got the stuff he had fed him the night before.

"Liquid dynamite, if ever there was," he muttered when Phil attempted to quiet his fears.

On Friday night the phenomenon was repeated. This time half the town saw it. It was unmistakable, the flash even being reflected on the window panes of almost all the houses facing west.

Millie Felton, night operator at the telephone exchange, was kept busy answering fool questions.

She, herself, being on night duty, had not seen the affair. Thus, at the end of an hour's session over the wires, she could talk more sanely upon what others had seen than any other mortal in town.

AS IT happened, Jim Maddox was one of the few who had not seen the second appearance of the flash, and when he heard others talking about it the following day, he was bewildered at what he construed to be Phil Jaynes' generosity.

"I tell you," said Jim to Phil, as he lounged in the back room among the bottles, mortars and philtres, "you are getting altogether too liberal for a law-abiding citizen. Look out it doesn't get us all in dutch and shut off the supply."

"Don't talk like an idiot, Jim," retorted Phil impatiently. "It's serious, this is."

He led the way outside into the street and pointed to groups of men and women putting their heads together and discussing the affair.

"Listen to them if you think I'm lying," said Phil, nodding in the direction of one of the groups.

They joined the assemblage. Ed Jones was doing the talking, and Jim, after a few moments, found himself in perfect agreement with that individual's sentiments.

Ed vouched he was near the beach when it came to pass, and swore he heard a missile sing past him at the rate of four hundred miles an hour, or perhaps half an hour—he wasn't sure that he wanted to convict himself on that point—but he heard it whistle past and since he'd been in France he knew what a shrieking shell sounds like. He was willing to stand on that.

Fat Chowder contradicted him vigorously. He said the whistling preceded the flash.

"Any fool who knows a thing or two about artillery knows the order in which these things occur. Cause and effect—diagnosis and treatment—get it straight and don't invert the order. How about it, Doc?"

"Well," averred Dock, deliberately, "I've always heard tell that light travels faster'n sound. Therefore——"

"Shucks, Doc! You've got to show me before I'm convinced," vehemently exclaimed Fat in genuine disgust.

That left the argument just about where it was when it began. Up came Joe Fellows and his wife. Joe spoke first and contributed to the mystery. He avowed:

"If you people are discussing the thing that most of us are, then you are all wrong." He shifted the cud

of tobacco into the other cavern of his cheek and continued:

"I saw it with my own eyes, and I have enough experience to add to my deductions. I don't think you'll find me far wrong when I say it was an electric display, just like the aurora borealis Jack London describes in his Alaskan yarns."

"I know he's right, for I once saw one of them myself up in Nome along in the——"

Mrs. Fellows sniffed. She was a distinct personality and had her own opinions. Joe lapsed into troubled silence.

"Rubbish!" announced she. "It was bootleggers. Ten to one it was."

She looked around to see if anyone would dare to dispute her word.

"I think you're right, ma'am," agreed Ted Hill, who had joined the group. "Some of us saw the answering signal up on yonder slope."

He pointed widely to the curving landscape a mile and a half along the range and designated a point near a clump of sugar pines.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if they wasn't a convoy of motor trucks hiding around up on the Pass waiting to take the stuff up the highway to the city. That's my guess, and I'll warrant I'm not far wrong."

Mrs. Fellows beamed complacently. Said she, speaking as one having superior knowledge:

"You're right. I've seen their tracks."

Jim Maddox turned pale and tugged at Phil Jaynes' sleeve.

"Let's break loose from here," he whispered.

Joe protested his wife's assertions. She swung on him:

"Aurora borealis—my eye! You know danged well, Joe, you was in bed when it all happened or you'd a-been down to the beach trying to get your fill. I ain't no fool."

"I'll swear to that," murmured Joe as his wife hauled him off.

Because Ezra Scott, editor of the Carterville *Independent*, had misplaced his dictionary, he called the prenomenon the "Carterville Apparition," and then had to draw upon his imagination to make the affair tally with his title for it.

Imagination was one thing that he was gifted with; in fact, his paper might have been said to exist for the sole purpose of giving expression to Scott's one and only bid for fame.

He imbued the apparition with psychic powers, clothed it with the cunning of a Paris modiste and turned out as fanciful a gem as could be imagined anywhere.

The town praised Ezra for his contribution to science, art and religion.

The result of all this was that at the end of a week Carterville was no closer to the truth about this disturber of its repose than it ever was.

But its peace of mind had been considerably shaken, just as in most cases where imagination runs riot.

Then followed a tragedy.

PUG MULLER and Artie Swanson crouched together by a water-soaked log on the beach, shivering with excitement.

They heard the cadences of the town band beating upon the night air, as a goodly portion of the population assembled in Odd Fellows' Hall above Jarvis' grocery for the weekly dance and wienie roast.

Pug and Artie, who had their own ideas about such things, had agreed not to attend. They had other sombre purposes.

Fired by Ezra Scott's description of the mysterious nocturnal appari-

tion, they had decided to do a little sleuthing of their own and reap a little glory, if there was any to be had.

Pug was for his age—he was just sixteen—one of the best swimmers in those parts, and Artie, three years his junior, was good in the dashes—that is, it was conceded, for his age, for he was only a kid.

Together they crouched on the beach, half stripped for action, peering into the darkness out to sea.

The advancing waves diffused a certain small amount of lumination, but certainly not enough to see much by. His voice quavering with suspense, Artie gave voice to his feelings:

"Y' know, Pug, I guess this is som'what daring when y' come to think of't, us sitting here in th' dark waiting for sompthun to happen way out there. F'r my part——"

"You ain't scairt, are you?" broke in his companion. "For if you are, you might's well go along home t' bed. In fact, I ain't so sure but what I shouldn't have brung you 'long anyway."

"Oh, chase yourself! You think that I ain't got any nerve? What you want to do is capture all the applause there's to be got. I ain't no dumb-bell and I ain't going to be talked into goin' home. So there!"

Pug grunted. Eyes fixed on the distance, he leaned forward over the log and peered hard into the darkness. He gripped his comrade's skinny shoulder.

"Look!" he whispered between his teeth. "See it? See what I see?"

Artie bent forward.

"Where? I don't see it. What is it?"

Pug pointed.

"Way out beyond the breakers. Looks like a funny sort of boat—a derrick. Tain't so far out but what I could——"

He leaped up.

"You wait here, Artie. I'm going to swim out to it."

"You think I ain't got no nerve?" cried the other. "I'm going, too."

Artie slipped out of his pants and stood revealed in a bathing suit. Pug was ahead of him in the water.

Together they swam, silently, breathing deeply, stroke after stroke in the direction to which Pug had pointed.

Presently the smaller of the two boys found himself gradually dropping back, out-distanced by Pug.

At the end of five minutes Pug had settled into an even pulling stroke and was set for distance. Then, from behind, he heard Artie call:

"Pug—Pug—I'm going back. I'll wait for you by the log!"

"Awright—Artie—I won't never say you ain't got no nerve."

Artie heard him, and grinned proudly. He turned around and arm over arm drew himself back to the shore. There he waited for Pug's return.

How long he waited he had no means of guessing. It seemed like a long time — months — perhaps years—even ages. He huddled down by the log and rubbed his slim arms and legs to increase the circulation.

Then out of the dark—a vivid, blinding flash!

Artie dropped to his face in the sand, scared. He heard a moan come from over the waters beyond the breakers, then the pounding of the blood in his own ears kept out all other sounds. His face was as white as a sheet when he drew himself to his feet.

"Pug," he whispered. "Pug, do you hear me? Pug!"

No answer. Fright seized him. Turning his back on the ocean, he

ran as hard as he could and did not stop until he reached home. His parents were still at the Odd Fellows' Hall, and Artie scrambled into bed.

THE next morning most of Carterville had assembled on the beach. A body had been washed up by the waves and had been identified as Pug Muller. The doctor had seen it and had pronounced his opinion:

"Badly burned, blinded, and then death from drowning."

Sheriff Baxter had come over from Harkness, and at the doctor's suggestion, for Doctor Williams seemed to be but one of the very few who were able to keep a clear head, had telephoned to the Federal authorities.

The town thought it wise—it did not want Japanese or Mexican mine layers laying their devices that close to the shore.

Later a Federal officer arrived and an investigation was made, and certain things were discovered which the Federal officer thought it wiser to keep to himself.

AS silently as he had disappeared, so silently did Doctor Griegson return to the shades of the campus.

He reached his home in the evening, riding up to his front door on Baddeley Street on the seat of a transfer truck.

Mrs. Dormer showed the transfer man in which corners of the Doctor's study and laboratory to deposit his trunks.

"Must be full of lead. Heavy as the dickens," vouched the driver as he eased one of the trunks off his back.

Doctor Griegson waited until the morning before he presented himself to the Dean.

The sun rose and he left the house tightly grasping a bulging brief case. He knocked upon the Dean's office door, removed his shabby fedora and went in.

He was a different man now than he was two weeks ago. He was alert with the wine of success bubbling through his veins. Said he to Doctor Johnstone:

"Good morning, Dean. I am now ready to report to my classes."

"Good morning, Doctor Griegson. I hope your—er—your experiments met with their deserved success."

"Very successful. Thank you, most successful. I expect shortly to publish a brochure on my findings. I hope they will do credit to the University."

"I am sure they will."

A few minutes later Doctor Griegson stood before his slumbering students.

It might have been observed, had anyone been alert enough to notice the fact, that during the entire lecture hour the professor did not have occasion to open his brief case.

He evidently thought that the audience was not in a sufficiently receptive mood to appreciate its contents.

The hour dragged along with the caterpillar speed of a slow freight train loaded with sheep.

It might also have been observed, had anyone present been alert enough to make the observation, that a seemingly perfect stranger to the campus was strolling up and down under the shade of the eucalyptus trees just outside of the lecture hall.

He was a man of substantial bearing, dressed in blue serge and had sharp gray eyes.

Evidently he had business there, or he would not have been wasting such a perfect morning in so restricted a space as a corner of the college campus.

The metaphorical freight train pulled its last car until it was a fine point on the horizon, and Doctor

Griegson's students rose from their seats, gathered up their books, and dispersed to other classes.

The man who had been idling away the better part of an hour, now advanced, entered the lecture-room and accosted the professor.

"Doctor Griegson, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. That is my name."

"Perhaps you have time to come with me over to the Administration Building. I have an appointment with President Blythe and I have requested that you be present."

Griegson glanced at his watch.

"Yes, indeed," he replied without hesitation. "I do have time. I shall be pleased to accompany you."

He swiftly and with jerky arm movements erased all traces of his notations from the board at his back, clapped his hands together to shake off the particles of chalk dust, picked up his brief case and fell in step with the stranger.

Together they entered the President's office.

They took seats near that individual's desk. The stranger was the first to break the silence. Directing his words at Doctor Griegson, he said:

"Let me introduce myself. I am Mr. Gadsby of the United States Department of Justice."

The name of the man or the office he represented meant nothing to Griegson.

"It is a pleasure I am sure——"

"Hold on. Not so fast, Professor. I am here to investigate the little matter of your recent jaunt into the country. Ever hear of Pug Muller?"

"Pug Muller? I am sure not——"

"Of Carterville?"

Griegson was still floundering hopelessly in a mental fog. He turned to President Blythe for help.

"I think, Griegson," suggested the president helpfully, "if you told Mr. Gadsby where you have been for the past two weeks it might clear up things."

"Oh, yes. That is simple. I have been conducting a series of experiments—successfully, too, if I may say so——"

"Where?" broke in Gadsby.

"Near a little hamlet on the coast."

"Carterville?"

"Yes, I think that is what it is called. Really a delightful little pastoral retreat if I recall rightly."

"If you recall? Why, you've just come from there!" shouted Gadsby impatiently.

"Oh, no. I did not step foot in the place. I lived in a small shack, most comfortably, too, some distance down the beach."

"One room, a broken window and a cot?"

"Yes. Did you run across it?"

Gadsby ignored the question and asked one of his own.

"What were the experiments?"

Griegson opened his brief case. Papers, covered with his fine writing, and colored photographs spilled out onto the desk.

Gadsby picked up one of the photos. He dropped it. Picked up another. An oath escaped him.

"These — God, man — are you mad?"

"Perfectly sane," replied Griegson modestly.

"Why, they're fish!"

"Of course. I am not aware that I said they were not. Really, you are somewhat exacting."

President Blythe broke in:

"May I be permitted to question Doctor Griegson, Mr. Gadsby? I think we can cover more ground."

Gadsby threw up his hands in despair.

"Do!"

"Doctor, you have been away two weeks taking photographs of fish?"

"Exactly."

"How did you take them and where?"

"Off the coast, near Carterville. The water there is smooth, and the bottom most interesting in the nature of its submarine vegetation."

"What was your process in taking them?"

"I erected a reflector on a triangular structure with their three bases on pontoons. Shall I give you the measurements?

"No—don't," curtly put in Gadsby.

"Very well. With a charge of magnesium in the center of the triangle just above the surface of the water, and a dry cell battery to discharge the powder when I pressed a button from under the surface, after I had got my camera into position—but that is not the point.

"Though I do take some small credit for the ingeniousness of the device, especially the reflector to drive the rays downward, I hope to prove to the scientific world that the preparation I used for sensitizing the camera plates is an advance upon any present methods.

"It opens the field to vast new researches in submarine color photography of fish in their native habitat."

"Let's get this straight," said Gadsby. "You went down to the bottom of the ocean? How?"

"It isn't very deep in that particular spot, and I used a form of diving suit of my own device. It is handy and needs nobody else but myself to operate it.

"What time of day did you work?"

"All times. I was frequently up all night and then worked a large part of the day preparing my plates."

"What time did you play tag with the fish?"

"I—I am afraid I don't understand your question."

"What time did you do the actual protographing?" interpolated the President.

"Oh! At night. I found it better to work then. There was no counter reflection from the sun."

"Meet with any interference?" put in Gadsby.

"None, for I worked when everybody else was asleep."

"But Pug Muller!" broke in Gadsby impatiently.

"Who is he? I have never heard of him."

"I see," Gadsby reflected. "Never saw him? Upon oath?"

"Never saw him," vouched the still puzzled Griegson.

"When the flashes went off—where were you?"

"Under water, of course, as I have tried to explain."

"How much magnesium did you use in a charge?"

"About a pound."

"Whew! Well, that's enough, Professor. Thank you—that will be all."

President Blythe nodded, and Griegson, still lost in bewilderment, left. In a befuddled state of mind he ambled home.

He said to his housekeeper:

"By the way, Mrs. Dormer, ever hear of a person called Pugdog or Bulldog Muller?"

"No, sir, never. Who is he?"

"That I cannot say. And yet, would you believe me, I have wasted a full hour in being asked that particular question."

"Perhaps he's one of your students, sir."

"A happy thought, Mrs. Dormer. I will have to go over the roll tomorrow. I haven't done so this semester yet. Please remind me in the morning. Bulldog Muller—I really must make his acquaintance."

Up There

By CHARLES ARNISON

"SHE'S out of control, I think," said Barton, staring up through his binoculars. "Have a look."

He handed the glasses to young Charley Hagan, who looked a long time. The distant plane, a mere dot to the naked eye, slanted slowly downward across the hard blue of the Southwestern sky.

"I can't see Bill's head. He must have fainted or something and dropped down into the cockpit."

"She's circling a little to the right, and the wind will help that. She'll land over there in the desert."

He pointed with a lean brown finger.

"It's pretty smooth out there, fortunately. We can't possibly get there before he comes down. Come on."

He led a rush to the ancient Ford which was one of the most valued possessions of the stunt team.

Barton drove, and the other two had their eyes glued on the distant plane, which circled slowly and finally dipped and was lost to sight behind a dune.

"She came down steady," announced young Hagan from the back seat. "It's mostly good ground over there. Even if he didn't come to she may have landed all right. Heave it out of her, Rod."

IN TEN minutes the Ford breasted a slight rise in the ground and a restrained cheer rose from the back seat. Half a mile ahead stood the plane, uninjured as far as could be seen.

As Barton swung the Ford under the nose of the plane, the two behind leaped out and rushed for the derelict.

Young Christopher Mayo was first at the cockpit. An instant and he dropped back with blanched face.

"What——"

"Did he——"

"He's gone."

They looked at each other.

"That makes four."

"We can fly her back, Rod. She's not damaged any."

"I'll fly her back myself," answered Barton gravely.

He walked round, inspecting the undercarriage, which had not suffered any damage from the unpiloted landing of the well-balanced plane. Then he scanned the wings and struts narrowly, and climbed in.

Turning to wedge himself into the little seat, he stopped suddenly as if stung, then thoughtfully lifted and unbuckled the safety strap which keeps the stunt pilot from falling out.

He held the ends in his hands for a moment before twisting them under the seat; they wouldn't be wanted for the short flip back to the flying ground. Then he ran his eye over the instruments, paused a moment in thought at the switch, which was in the off position, and nodded to Hagan.

The boy swung the propeller. Barton called "Contact" and the engine sprang into life. He worked the throttle, listening critically while she gave a couple of throbbing roars; the others held her by the wings.

Mayo shouted: "Take a run round and see if you can see him on the ground anywhere."

The dark man looked at him, oddly hesitant in assent, then he shouted back, "All right."

They swung the tail round and let go. The slip-stream scattered the gravel about them as she gathered way, rose smoothly as a bird, and skimmed away to the northwest, flying low over the ground.

The two left behind reentered the Ford and rattled away toward the line of trees whose faded green marked the site of the training camp.

"Old Rod seems a bit funny this morning," volunteered young Hagan, breaking the silence.

"Well," answered the other crossly, "poor Bill Rees has gone west. It's not a cheerful day exactly."

"It's not that altogether. He didn't like Bill, anyway. He's not feeling specially broken up over him. He's got something on his mind. It's queer about these four disappearances."

"Uh-huh," grunted Mayo unencouragingly.

The youngster subsided into silence again.

A black cloudbank was spreading across the sky, and a patter of hail rattled on the tinny bonnet of the car as they bowled along towards camp.

"READ it out again," said Christopher.

Barton read again the brief article in the Danesville *Argus*.

> "This is the fourth accident of the kind which has happened in this locality within the past year. The only conclusion we can come to when a plane comes down with its pilot missing is that he has fallen out while in flight; and this points to some defect, though of what nature we cannot suggest, in the stability of the planes used or in the appliances provided for the pilots' safety. We call the matter to the attention of the authorities and demand the most searching investigation."

"There you are," concluded Barton, "he knows all about it."

"Well, they must have fallen out, mustn't they? Where else could they go? We all have the common sense we were born with."

Charley Hagan's round, pink face —he was the junior pilot of the stunt team—certainly stood for no more than courage.

Rodman Barton, dark and saturnine and thirty-three, was of another makeup. The two juniors looked to him for the thinking for the party.

"What's on your mind, Rod?" Christopher Mayo came between the other two.

"Did you see the safety strap in Bill's machine?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice anything about it?"

"No, not specially."

"Well, it was buckled."

"Oh! Then—then how could he—"

"Exactly."

They looked at one another.

"And if he fell out, it would be in stunting, wouldn't it?"

"Yes . . . And she came down planing."

"The switch was off," answered Barton. "She had gas, and oil, and was in good running order. I used her for half an hour, running over the ground where he might have fallen. If he did fall. . . ."

"If he did fall? But he must have fallen."

"I suppose so," assented Barton.

There was silence for a minute. Then he added: "By the way, you might fill up Bill's plane and look her over. I think I'll go up and have a flip round this afternoon."

"Doesn't look very good up there, does it?" commented Mayo. "Those black clouds that have been hanging about all day look like weather to me. We had a touch of hail this morning."

The air was sultry and electrical; and as if to back up Mayo's words a grumble of thunder came across from where the distant mesas cut the line of clear sky below the cloud-bank.

"I'll come down if it looks bad," answered Barton. "Those clouds are low, anyhow. I'll go up over them; there'll be sunshine above."

He rose and went to his shack. Going in, he sat down on the camp-bed, lighted a pipe and sank into thought. Presently glancing out the small window he noted that the two younger men, their task finished, had left the plane alone in the open.

Then he took an automatic shotgun from its peg, loaded it with buck-shot cartridges and slipped a few more in his pocket. Going out, he moved furtively toward the plane, keeping the gun concealed behind his body from the view of anyone in the other shack, and stowed it on the floor of the plane.

Then he shouted, and the two youngsters came out.

The ritual of starting, with its unvarying movements and words, came to an end; the little plane gathered speed and rose purring into the air. She circled up and up, the men on the ground watching her, till she was but a speck in the sky.

Then she slipped behind a gray mass of cumulus cloud.

MAYO and Hagan had not been in the College waiting room more than five minutes when a lean gray-haired man came in.

"Ah, Mr. Mayo, I presume? And this will be Mr. Hagan. How do you do."

"You wrote that you wished to see us, I think, Sir."

Mayo, as senior, took the lead.

"Yes, we have had a very odd . . . well, before I come to that, I think I mentioned to you in my letter that I am professor of Psychology in the University here. We have been carrying on some interesting investigations of what is called spiritualism—most interesting and illuminative. We have been testing two or three of the so-called mediums. I was very sceptical—indeed, I still am, but not so much so since this incident, which seems to be working up in a remarkable manner. Tell me, did you ever know a man named Rodman Barton?"

"We did," answered Mayo.

"Is he—has he passed away?"

"Yes."

"May I ask when and how?"

"About a year ago he disappeared out of an aeroplane near a place called Janesville, where we had a temporary aviation camp."

"Disappeared! An odd phrase, if I may say so?"

"Well," answered Mayo, "his aeroplane was found, wrecked, but he was

not in or near it. And there had been other cases of a similar kind."

"Extraordinary," said the professor, rubbing his hands. "It is difficult to believe—I have great difficulty in believing it myself—but it is possible that you may receive a communication from your friend. We have had two messages—very insistent messages—through one of our mediums, giving your address and demanding that you be brought here. I disregarded the first; one gets so much nonsense; but when it was repeated I wrote to the address indicated, and here you are. It is odd, very odd, and perhaps significant. So often these alleged spirit messages are vague; but this one has been quite definite. Your names and addresses were correct, were they not?"

"Quite, Professor."

"Yet, of course, you were entire strangers to us all here. There could be no thought-transference in question. . . .

"However, to cut the matter short, can you both come tonight at eight o'clock? We shall be having a seance then. Of course, nothing will necessarily occur tonight, if at all; the spirit, if such it is, will not necessarily be at the telephone, so to speak, tonight.

"But it may be. Come, at any rate."

"I'M telling the rest of this story myself. Charlie Hagan and I turned up at eight o'clock as the old professor had said.

"It was a long gray range of buildings where the professor held forth and we went in a door off a sort of campus and through endless passages to a small room up in the top somewhere. It was on the back, looking away from the city, and so there was no light or noise outside.

"The professor (he conducted us up) and two or three other professors were there and a thin birdlike young man who seemed to be a sort of manager or showman.

"There was a huge, fat woman in a black dress who sat in an armchair in the middle of the room like a lump of dough, and said nothing; I took her to be the medium.

"They sat us down in the corner, and the old chap searched all about the place, to make sure she had no tricks concealed anywhere, I suppose, and then we all got round in a circle and they turned out the lights, all except a sort of red photographer's lamp in one corner, which only showed you how dark it was.

"The thin young man made a couple of passes in front of the fat woman with something shiny, and then she shut her eyes and began to snore, and the rest of us sat round in dead silence. I don't know if it was for minutes or hours.

"By this time our nerves were getting all strung up in the dark, and when the medium suddenly jerked in her chair and stopped snoring we all jumped. Then the silence settled down again.

"After a bit the medium gave us all a start, breaking out suddenly into a snatch of speech in a high strident voice, but it was only a sentence or two, which we couldn't understand, though I saw the professor trying to jot it down in his notebook. Then there was another long, creepy silene.

"Suddenly the woman spoke up in a loud, clear voice.

" 'Is that you, Chris?'

"I could have jumped five yards. It was Rod Barton's voice, but different somehow, sort of tinny, like a voice coming through a gramophone or a speaking tube.

" 'Greet him,' whispered the Professor in my ear.

"I said 'Hullo, Rod, old man, is that you?' "But my voice quavered so that I'm sure he couldn't have recognized it.

"'I wanted to warn you,' continued the voice. 'I'll tell you what happened. Listen. I always had an idea—ah!'

"It went off into a kind of wail, fading away.

"'They're dragging me——'

"I can't describe how horrible that sounded.

"There was a silence again; then it came back, loud and clear.

"'I've got back. Listen quick.'

"IT WENT on like that, on and off, as if something or somebody was at the other end of a telephone talking to you and every now and then something horrible got at him and dragged him away from the phone and sent all sorts of gibberish and horrid yammerings through instead. Sometimes it was faint, sometimes louder. But I'll give it as continuously as I can.

"'I always had an idea,' he said, 'that something existed up in the air that we don't know about. Now that we're getting to the upper altitudes we'll perhaps know soon. I took a shotgun up with me; I don't know why. I might have known it was useless.

"'Have you ever had that feeling, when you were up in a single-seater among clouds, that you weren't alone up there; that things were watching you. I have—often.

"And you remember how those four planes came down, and in every case there was no sign of trouble. Engine switched off, in two cases, and safety straps buckled in the two I saw, so how could they have fallen out? And we never heard of any of the bodies being found. . . .

"'Well, I went up that afternoon after Bill Rees went West. No doubt you saw me slip up among those heavy black clouds. I wanted to find out. I was tired of life, anyhow. But I hadn't reckon on this. Oh, my God!

"'I don't think you find the things everywhere; they just occur in shoals, like whales in the sea; moving about.

"'I was in among those big, cumulus clouds, like a bird flying among cliffs. It was dull and lifeless all round. The gray rolling masses shifted slowly as I slid past them, showing pinnacles and caves and rifts, some lighter, some darker.

"'I had that feeling I have spoken of, that things were watching me. I turned the plane's nose up and tried to work out above the clouds to where I knew must be the sunshine, but after climbing two thousand feet I was surrounded on all sides by the rolling masses of gray stuff.

"'And then I saw eyes in the recesses of a great cavern among the clouds, great shadowy eyes, looking at me with a sort of cold malignity. I passed those, shivering, and got away, with a cold perspiration streaming down inside my goggles.

"'I managed to wipe the mist off the lenses, and when I could see clearly again another pair of eyes were looking at me out of the grayness of the walls, and nearer.

"'The cloud-chasm narrowed ahead and there seemed to be streamers of thin gray mist trailing across it. I made an Immelmann turn. I was in such a hurry to dodge those streamers; and. . . . there were others behind me.

"'I cut off the engine and put her nose down to drop through them at all costs to the wholesome, hard earth below; I wanted to see it so badly; but the banks were closing in, and the streamers were everywhere, and the eyes. . .

"'One of the streamers licked across the cockpit and touched my face. It had a sort of clammy feeling. As I drew away from it, it seemed to let go, and to leave a kind of cold mark behind.

"'I noticed the air-speed indicator. It had dropped—good heavens, it had dropped to almost zero. I thought I

must be falling in some extraordinary manner, but the altimeter showed no decrease of altitude. It was borne in on me somehow that I was caught and held cushioned on these horrible shadowy tentacles.

" 'The creatures were all round me now. They seemed to come from every crevice in the clouds, like octopi or polyps rising out of a coral reef.

" 'I got down into . . . '

"Here the voice became faint, and disappeared. The medium was silent, then the voice that might have been Barton's came again, very faint.

" 'Very difficult,' it said;—'hard to get—away.'

"And then: 'They seemed to be a sort of gaseous octopi or some such creatures. I think they are only visible when their thin, tenuous substance has intercepted and held cloud-particles. I saw hail-stones lying on the backs of some of them!'

"I heard young Hagan shivering in his corner so that his teeth chattered.

"The voice came again wearily:

" 'I noticed the tentacles that were round my neck. There seemed to be more substance in them than in the others, and sort of waves of pinkish and grayish color pulsed up them; you could still see through them, but they weren't gray only. I think they were sucking the substance out of me.

" 'At the end, I put my hand up to take hold of the joystick, and I saw the stick through my hand. I felt weak and all gone inside, and my legs slipped out of the strap—or it passed through them—I don't know. . . .

" 'I'm a thin sort of shadow like them now. I drift up here among them and I can't get down. They stare at me but they don't touch me; there's nothing left——'

"After a time it came again faintly.

" 'Don't fly among clouds in that part of the country. They aren't everywhere. Devils—'

"There was silence. The lights came on, and the fat woman opened her eyes and stretched herself.

" 'I've had a hard time tonight', she said in a dull voice. Did you hear anything worth while?' "

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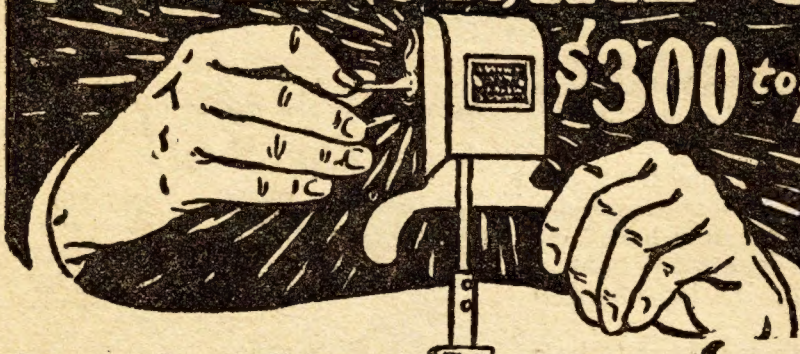

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sells by thousands new automatic attachment that sworn public tests prove makes Fords run

43.8 Miles on 1 Gallon of Gas

Agents everywhere report astounding results. R. K. Waite ordered 1000 Blancke devices in *one month*. (Profit $3000.00). Wires, "Get ready another 2000." Clyde B. Jones sold 63 devices in one day. (Profit $189.00). You don't need experience.

What Is This Sensational Demonstration?

The instant heat touches the Blancke Thermostatic Carburetor Control, the needle valve on the carburetor slowly turns before the fascinated eyes of spectators. As it cools the needle valve turns back again. It is easy to understand why immensely superior results can be obtained with this accurately adjusted automatic instrument—to see why Blancke Thermostatic Carburetor Control in official public and private tests showed 43.8 per gallon of gas. 250,000 tests averaged 32 miles per gallon. *Guaranteed to give over 30 miles per gallon on Fords.*

Starts Motor Instantly

in any weather without use of choke. Guaranteed results combined with amazing demonstration make Blancke Control greatest agent's selling success of recent years.

Get One Free to Introduce

Also Blancke Plan that starts you without capital in a real business that pays you $300.00 to $2500.00 and up each month. Exclusive Territory. Sales guaranteed. Start to make big money—beginning NOW! Send coupon today for sample Blancke Control and great Distributor's Plan.

Strongest Guarantee In Automotive History

backs sale of Blancke Controls. Guaranteed to give over 30 miles per gallon on Fords — to practically eliminate carbon formation and its troublesome consequences —to save half oil—to relieve battery strain—make motor run smoother — give better acceleration—allow lower speeds in high gear. Starts motor immediately in any weather without use of choke and saves half repair bills. No holes to drill; no bolts to remove. Anyone can attach it in 3 minutes.

SALES Guaranteed

BLANCKE AUTO DEVICES CO.

154 E. Erie St. Dept. 743-H Chicago, Ill.

Mail This Important Coupon Today!

Blancke Auto Devices Co.,
Dept. 743-H, 154 E. Erie St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: I should like to get a Blancke Control Free to introduce in my community. Also send details of amazing new Guarantee Plan by which I can make from $300.00 to $2,500.00 a month profit.

Name.....

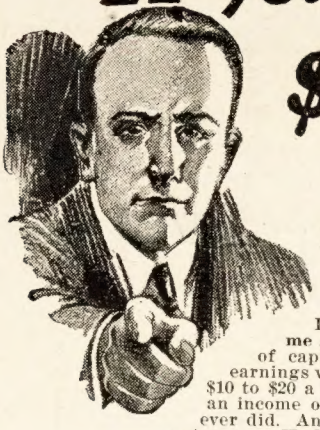
Address.....

City.....State.....

$15.00 a Day Guaranteed to Distributors

Cadillac, La Salle and Delco Light now use as standard equipment Thermostatic Carburetor Control under Blancke License. You can get no better proof of merit than this!

If you want to make $100 a Week and get a Hudson Coach this is Your chance



If you want to make $100 a week **write to me at once.** You won't have to invest a cent of capital. You don't need experience. Your earnings will start **immediately.** You can clear from $10 to $20 a day your **very first days.** You can enjoy an income of $5,000 a year for the easiest work you ever did. And in addition to this **big money** you can get a new Hudson Super-Six Coach absolutely FREE.

Look at These Amazing Earnings

Here are a few plain facts. Joseph Williams, of Texas, made $26 in a single day by devoting only a few hours to this pleasant work. R. L. Marshall, of New Jersey, has cleaned up $80 in five hours' time. H. T. Pearl, of Oklahoma, made a net clear profit of $750 in one month. And **right now** I am offering you a chance to make this big money for yourself. I need 500 men and women to represent us in some of our richest territories. I want men and women who know a real proposition when they see it; who are ambitious to make **big money;** who would like to become the most successful person in their community. If you act **quick,** this wonderful opportunity is yours. Then, if you will simply follow a few instructions you will find it easy to make $100 a week, or even more.

BIG, STEADY PROFITS WAITING FOR YOU

We are the largest and most successful company of our kind in the world. We have been in business for nineteen years. Our resources are over a million dollars. Our products—ZANOL products—are advertised in such big national magazines as The Saturday Evening Post, The Ladies' Home Journal, Woman's Home Companion and McCall's. We have hundreds of thousands of customers in every part of the country. During the past twelve months these customers bought millions of dollars' worth of ZANOL Products from us.

GET YOUR SHARE OF TWO MILLION DOLLARS

But ZANOL Products are **never** sold in stores. Instead we appoint an authorized representative in every community to represent us and handle all of our business with our customers. For doing this easy, pleasant, dignified work, our representatives made over a million and a half dollars last year. This year they will make two million dollars. And if you wil accept my offer **now** you can begin to get **your** share of these tremendous profits. I will give you an exclusive territory. I will help you get every dollar's worth of business from your territory. I will protect your interests so that you, and you alone, will get **all** of the profits.

YOUR EARNINGS START IMMEDIATELY

You can begin to enjoy a big income immediately. I furnish you with a complete equipment for doing business, absolutely FREE. I tell you exactly what to do. I tell you where to go and what to say, how to make money. T. R. Anders, of Pa., made $15 his first day. Albert Peters earned $20 in 3 hours, and $75 his first week. Glenn Kiser, of Va., ended his first day with a profit of $16.68. Christopher Vaughn netted $125 in one week. And there isn't a reason in the world why you can't do as well or better than any of these representatives.

All we ask you to do is to introduce yourself as the ZANOL Representative in your locality. The rest is easy. Your income will increase by leaps and bounds. You will be astounded at the way the money will come rolling in. You will be amazed to find that in a short time you will have an income of $100 a week—or over $5,000 a year.

GET THE FACTS TO-DAY

Just send me your name and I will tell you how to get started in this wonderful, money-making business. I will give you all the details. I will show you how you can make $100 a week, and even in your spare time $8 to $10 a day for a few hours' work. I will show you how you can earn $47 in a single day, as Henry Albers did. I will show you how you can duplicate John Scotti's record of $97 clear profit his second week. I will show you how you can add $50 a week to your income in spare time just as Mrs. K. R. Roof has done. And I will show you how you can get a new Hudson Super-Six Coach entirely FREE.

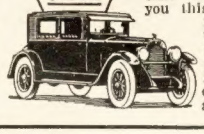
SEND NO MONEY

I don't want you to send me a cent. You risk nothing. You do not have to agree to pay anything or do anything. Let me tell you about this marvelous opportunity. Let me prove to you that you can make $100 a week without working half as hard as you are right now. Mail the coupon to-day. Get started in this fascinating work. Don't wait until someone else gets in ahead of you. Make up your mind **now** that you are going to get **your** share of the two million dollars profits which my representatives are going to make this year. Write today.

THE AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO.
Albert Mills
President and General Manager
Dept. 7374. Cincinnati, Ohio.
©A.P. Co.

Hudson Super-Six Coach FREE!

We want you to realize that this is a high-grade proposition. We want to help you in every way to make large profits and we offer to provide a brand-new Hudson Super-Six Coach without any expense to you whatever. The car is given to you outright and becomes your personal, permanent property. Just write for our proposition. Mail the coupon for details of the plan that will give you this automobile without expense and an income of $100 a week.



$100 Profit Every Week
L. C. Van Allen, of Illinois, says: "Before I accepted the ZANOL Agency I was making $100 a month, but now I average more than that a week. My profit last week was $125 clear, so you can't blame me for being so enthused about the business."

$50 Profit Her First Week
Mrs. K. R. Roof of South Carolina is the ZANOL Representative in her spare hours. She finds this work pleasant and profitable. Her first week she cleared over $50.00.

$30 to $35 a Day
Not long ago I made $25 clear profit in less than eight hours and in a district which I have considered very poor. But this is far from being my record day as I have often made from $30 to $35.—John T. Tyler, Pennsylvania.

Mail this NOW

Albert Mills
Pres.,
The American Products Co.
Dept. 7374, Cincinnati, O.

I want to know how I can earn $100 a week as a ZANOL representative. Send me all the facts about your mony-making proposition, without cost or obligation.

Name .....

Address .....

....

Carlton Mills Offer You $100 a Week to Start,

Walter J. Gallagher
Sales Manager

We know if you'll put this complete Men's Furnishing Line in Your Pocket... you'll put $100.00 a week in with it!

MEN and Women, *by the hundreds*, earn this worthwhile amount . . . . Many earn more!

We manufacture the famous and complete *Carlton Custom Quality Line* of Men's Shirts, to which has just been added an equally wonderful range of Underwear & Pajamas.

What an opportunity!

Through you, we reach an American market of 35,000,000 prospects. Ever new—never exhaustible!

No experience is necessary . . . all you have to do is show our DeLuxe sample book pictured above—quote our low prices and take orders without effort. We deliver, collect and guarantee satisfaction.

You are paid in cash *daily*. To those who are ambitious, we pay besides their big earnings, extra cash bonuses, and a share in profits.

If you prefer, begin by devoting spare time—your earnings will soon justify full time to this big money making proposition.

Complete Sample Outfit—Free!

Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right, you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit—prices—order books, supplies, and valuable selling helps.

Compact Sales Kit furnished free—*goes in your pocket like the $100.00 a week*—so that you can conduct your business easily, with dignity and make more money in less time with least effort.

Let Carlton Mills build you a prosperous, happy future—in the present.

Act Now . . . . via Coupon!

No time like *at once* when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you.

Fill in, clip and mail! In less than a week you'll shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

Don't delay—mail it today!

[DISTRICT MANAGERS—Line up with this big selling proposition while desirable territories are still open for assignment. Write C. E. MANDEL, *President*, TODAY!]

DRESS SHIRTS

WORK SHIRTS

FLANNEL SHIRTS

UNDERWEAR

PAJAMAS

outfit free!

It Fits Your Pocket
Convenient to Carry wherever you go~

Biggest Commissions

25% Actually the commissions plus bonuses exceed 25%. Commissions are paid to you in advance. Carlton's Superiority, Variety and Completeness of Line enable you to run this 25% up to real big money. You have unlimited earning power. Make the most of it!

Bonuses in Addition

Bonuses too! Carltonians are given extra rewards with regularly paid bonuses in units up to $300.00. Your daily earnings are thereby given a real boost. Full details of the liberal Cash Bonus Plan are outlined in your sales outfit.

40% Profit Sharing

Paid in addition to your commissions and in addition to your bonuses. The most amazing and far-reaching move in the Direct Selling Field. Explained in "Earn Big Money" that goes with outfit.

FREE: TRANSPORTATION AND FREE COLLAR

It costs us $100,000 a year to prepay order shipments. But it is a saving to your customers! The latter is an additional sales feature with shirts priced from $2.95. . . Collars are worth from 50c to $1.00.

Pajamas—Underwear

Just added! . . . Two new departments that put The Carlton Line in a high powered sales class of its own! A Complete Gent's Furnishing Line in Your Pocket. Including Dress, Work and Flannel Shirts The Carlton Line comprises 181 styles and models. How's that for a *salable* selection?

The new Pajama and Underwear lines open new roads to increased business for you—double profits from every call—double satisfaction to each customer . . . all numbers are beautifully swatched and illustrated in handsome new sample book.

Carl E. Mandel, Pres. Dep't
Carlton Mills, Inc., 334
114 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Dear Mr. Mandel: Send at once FREE Sample Outfit of Carlton Shirts, Underwear and Pajamas. I'm ready for the $100.00 a week!

Name .....

Address .....

City..... State.....

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carlton MILLS Inc.

114 FIFTH AVENUE ~ NEW YORK ~ N.Y.

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